

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN EAU CLAIRE
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Study Abroad Handbook

UW-EAU CLAIRE



CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION

Summer/Fall 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Who Should Use this Handbook?

The policies, procedures, and general information in this handbook apply to **all students studying abroad through the Center for International Education (CIE), 3 Schofield Hall, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**. This handbook is NOT for students participating on faculty-led, intercultural immersion programs coordinated by the Intercultural Immersions Office under Academic Affairs. They are governed by a different set of policies and procedures available from that office.

How to Use this Handbook?

You are responsible for knowing the content of this handbook. Read it carefully and ask questions if there are items that you do not understand. You can print the information from this PDF if you prefer to have a hard copy.

Use the handbook in conjunction with your specific program guide. Go to www.uwec.edu/cie/studyabroad). On the left sidebar: *Current Participants, Summer/Fall 2017, Study Abroad Program Guide*.

Study Abroad at UWEC

Congratulations! You have decided to be one of the nearly 22% of UWEC students in your graduating class who will have studied abroad. UWEC ranks in the top 30 Master's granting institutions in the country for the number of our students who study abroad.

Mission: The mission of the study abroad unit of the CIE is to enhance the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire student experience by developing and administering high-quality international academic programs that are integrated into the campus curriculum. We provide students with opportunities to cultivate intercultural competency by engaging with people, cultures, languages, and systems abroad. This fosters global citizens who have personal

and professional skills for lifelong learning in a diverse world.

We fulfill our mission through a commitment to:

1. Develop and promote international academic programs for all curricular areas.
2. Develop and promote international academic programs with a focus on whole world study.
3. Encourage participation by all students, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in study abroad.
4. Foster development of intercultural competency and communication skills.
5. Support students in planning, processing, and articulating their experience during pre-departure preparations, while abroad, and upon return.

Your Responsibilities as a UWEC Study Abroad Participant

Pre-Departure: As stated in the *Statement of Participation* you signed in your online study abroad account, participating in a UWEC study abroad program is a privilege that comes with several responsibilities. These include:

1. Turning in all forms/materials required for your program by the stated deadlines.
2. Attending orientation on February 25.
3. Being responsible for the information in this handbook and the corresponding guide for your program.
4. Checking your UWEC e-mail 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. Making all program payments on time.

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

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. You can review these policies at www.uwec.edu/DOS/policies/Conduct.htm

If we receive a complaint 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 sanctions 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.

Some host universities and organizations will also have conduct codes that you must follow in addition to the Blugold Code.

As stated in the **Enrollment Agreement** that you signed in your online 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

Upon return: You are responsible for checking your UWEC academic record to make sure your grades and credits from abroad are posted as you expected. If not, you are expected to contact your study abroad coordinator for clarification.

Staff Resources

Study abroad staff: The CIE has three staff members responsible for managing programs. See the “Useful Names & Addresses” page to learn who coordinates your program.

Contact the study abroad staff with questions about: host-site academics, health and counseling services, housing, the UWEC cost estimate for your program, UWEC academic eligibility and course equivalencies, as well as questions regarding your online study abroad application, outstanding forms, study abroad registration, and CISI insurance enrollment.

Peer advisers: The Center for International Education hires returned study abroad participants to serve as peer advisers. Your peer adviser will work with your group at orientation and send weekly reminders about important deadlines and cultural topics.

Contact your PA with questions regarding anything in the weekly email as well as questions on packing, getting involved at your host site, personal travel, or cultural adjustment.

Written Resources

You will receive information at different points in the study abroad process. In addition to what is listed here, you may receive materials directly from your host institution.

Prior to Orientation:

Study Abroad Updates in your online study abroad account about finances, country resources, health & safety, prescription medications & allergies, and orientation
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This handbook

Your program-specific guide

At Orientation:

An emergency contact card to carry with you

A goal-setting worksheet

A budget worksheet

Post-Orientation:

Weekly e-mail updates from your peer adviser or a study abroad staff member until shortly before the end of the semester
An email with instructions on accessing your CISI insurance card and information
Basic visa instructions and application forms/links to application forms, if required by your host country
A packing list

ACADEMICS

Program Prerequisites

To participate in a CIE study abroad or exchange program, you must **be in good standing (academic, conduct and financial) and have the minimum cumulative GPA required.** You must maintain enrollment and continue to meet program eligibility requirements the semester prior to departure. All requirements are on the [CIE website](#)

We check grades and academic standing again at the end of the semester prior to departure. If you are on academic warning or probation, we will check with the host institution to see if you will be allowed to participate. **If you are suspended, you will not be allowed to participate in the program.** Please contact your study abroad coordinator if you have concerns about your academic performance at any time prior to your planned departure.

UWEC Study Abroad Registration

1. Go to your MyBlugold CampS account and **sign your online PPA for the term during which you will be abroad**, just as if you were going to be on campus. NO ONE in your program can be registered for study abroad until EVERYONE signs their PPA. A delay in registration can have significant consequences for students who use financial aid. Therefore, **please sign your online PPA for your term abroad as soon as it is available!**

2. Pay any **outstanding tuition and fees for the term prior to departure.** Until you do, you

cannot be registered for your study abroad program.

3. You do not need to complete any other registration at UWEC for your study abroad program.

4. Once your PPA is signed, and all outstanding UWEC bills are paid, the Registrar's staff will register you for your program under a temporary course number for the term.

The temporary course number is worth 12 credits for a semester program; summer and winterim credits vary depending on the program. You may be taking more credits at your host university than the temporary course code indicates, that is not a problem. **The actual credits will be posted when your transcript from abroad is received.**

INTA or INTX course codes:

Your temporary course number begins with an INTA or INTX prefix. **Once your grades from your host site arrive, your actual classes, credits, and grades will be posted on your UWEC transcript.** The INTA or INTX registration code will remain on your transcript so that UWEC can maintain historical records regarding who has studied abroad. However, the credit units will be removed and the INTA or INTX "course" will not be graded.

Registration at your host site:

Specific registration information for your host site is in your program guide.

Registering While Abroad for Your Next Semester at UWEC

If you are a continuing UWEC student, you will receive two e-mail notifications, generally in early-mid March for fall; **early-mid October for spring.**

1. From the CIE, when the class schedule is available on-line.
2. From the Blugold Central - Registrar, with instructions on how to access your degree audit and registration time via your

MyBlugold CampS account, just as if you were on campus.

PAC Code: If you are a sophomore (less than 60 credits completed), or are in a UWEC college that requires a PAC code to register, **you will need to e-mail your academic adviser directly to get your code.**

Registration for the Semester:

You will register through MyBlugold Camps, just as if you were on campus. You can then check your final registration online. **Due to different time zones and academic calendars around the world, your registration time may not be the most convenient for you!**

If you absolutely cannot access MyBlugold CampS, **you can register by e-mail.** Directions will be in the CIE class schedule email. You will be registered according to your assigned registration time. Personal travel is not a valid reason to not register yourself.

Registering for Winterim/Summer:

The Winterim schedule is available at the same time as the spring schedule, in early-mid October; the summer schedule is available online in December. You can register for Winterim or summer courses online.

Class Attendance

You are required to follow the attendance policies of your host institution. In general, you are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and field trips unless illness or other unavoidable circumstances make this impossible. Absences must be approved in advance by the instructor and may result in lower grades.

Credits and Course Load

- Credits earned on UWEC programs abroad are UWEC resident credits.
- Classes you take abroad will count towards total graduation credits.
- **Grades will be figured into your GPA.**
- Semester students are required to carry a full time course load (12-18

credits/semester). Dropping below full-time status may result in loss of financial aid and/or insurance coverage and must be approved in advance by the CIE.

Course Equivalencies

UWEC course equivalencies for courses taught abroad are established by the relevant UWEC department chair. Established equivalencies are on the [CIE website](#) and/or on the [Transfer Credit Wizard](#). On the program brochure page, you will find an Academics section. Click on the *Academics* link to find information on course equivalencies.

If a course you are interested in taking is not listed on the Academics page or in Transfer Credit Wizard, check your program guide for specific information about how and when new course equivalencies are established for your program.

It is unusual for an equivalency to be changed, but if you believe an established equivalency is incorrect, you can consult with the appropriate department chair to have the course re-evaluated. This appeal can be done before or after you take the course. You will need to provide documentation in the form of a course description, syllabus, reading list, or returned exams/papers, to support your request. Any changes approved need to be submitted by the department chair to regrec58@uwec.edu.

Petitioning Course Equivalencies

If the equivalency is correct, but you hope to have a course count toward a specific graduation requirement where it doesn't currently apply, you can discuss a [petition for partial waiver or substitution](#) with the **relevant department chair**. The petition form is available in your college/school Dean's Office. You will probably need to do this after you return, and you will need to show the following:

- a brief course description
- course syllabus
- course reading list

- any exams or papers that you turned in

General Education/Liberal Education Requirements

For eligible* students in catalog years through 2015-2016, semester study abroad fulfills the Foreign Culture requirement upon successful program completion. The requirement is not automatically applied: please email Degree Review at regrec53@uwec.edu after completion of the program to update your degree audit. (*Students earning a B.A., B.F.A. or B.M degree in the College of Arts & Sciences cannot use study abroad to fulfill their foreign language/foreign culture requirement. See the university catalog for details.)

Winterim and summer programs may fulfill part of the requirement. See the Academics page for your program on the CIE website to determine whether the program will fulfill any of the requirement.

Students in catalog years 2016 and can fulfill an integrated learning (I1) requirement upon completion of the study abroad integrated learning assignments. Details will be given at orientation.

Grades

If your host site does not grade on the U.S. system, your grades from abroad will be converted as approved by the UWEC Registrar. Details are in your program guide.

UWEC students abroad are not allowed to take classes pass/fail, and grades from your host site are posted to your UWEC transcript and figured into your UWEC GPA.

Why Do My Grades Count in My UWEC GPA?

When you get to your site abroad, you may learn from other U.S. students that their study abroad grades will not count into their home university GPA. They will get transfer or pass/fail (S/U) credit. So why does UWEC include study abroad grades in students' GPAs?

1. **UWEC considers study abroad an integral part of your academic career.** It is not a vacation, and it is not a trip. The cultural and personal learning is also valuable, but the academics take precedence from a university perspective.
2. **UWEC grants resident credit,** rather than transfer credit, for its study abroad programs. This is to your advantage in several ways: you remain a regularly enrolled UWEC student; you do not have a semester of transfer credit on your transcript, and if you are a senior, you do not have to worry about the requirement that you take your last 24 credits in residence.
3. **UWEC only allows students to take 12 credits pass/fail (S/U) during their entire academic career.** Most majors and minors allow only one S/U course to count, and some UWEC programs restrict S/U registration even further.
4. **Many graduate and professional schools will not accept S/U grades.** This means that study abroad students with S/U grades must contact the host institution and request that an official copy of the transcript be sent to the graduate school. This often takes a long time, and the official copy will not have grades translated into the U.S. system.

Transcripts

A grade report or transcript for your time abroad will be sent from your host site to UWEC, and courses/grades will be transferred to your UWEC transcript. Grades from abroad are entered after on-campus grades, so even if your semester is done before the UWEC semester ends, you may initially receive a grade report with "NR" (not reported). In many cases, the term abroad ends later than the UWEC semester, or the grading system has an outside review built in, which makes grade reporting a much longer process than it is here.

Seniors and Delaying Graduation

If you are a senior studying abroad for your last term, different timelines in grade reporting may require you to delay your graduation. The UWEC Registrar must receive grades within 42 days of the last day of the UWEC semester in order to confirm your graduation that semester. This is a UWEC requirement, and our partners abroad are unable to change their usual time lines to accommodate it.

Applying to the College of Education, Nursing or other competitive programs

If you plan to apply for admission to a UWEC professional program or other program that requires a transcript review for admission, check with your study abroad coordinator to be sure your grades will be available in time for the review. Again, our partners abroad are unable to change their usual time lines to accommodate such deadlines.

Accessing the UWEC Library

As a UWEC student, McIntyre librarians are available to assist you with your research questions, even when you are in another country. You can reach a librarian by e-mailing library.reference@uwec.edu, via online chat, or by clicking *Ask Us* (all available on the library homepage: www.uwec.edu/library).

Journal Articles: You have access to McIntyre Library's online journal article collection even when you are not on campus. You even have access to journal articles from its print collection. McIntyre Library will scan and e-mail articles to students abroad at no charge.

Books: You also have access to more than 8000 electronic books (e-books) on a broad range of subjects through the McIntyre Library Catalog.

Find details on accessing these services here: www.uwec.edu/Library/distance/abroad.htm

Service-Learning

You may have opportunities to complete your service-learning requirement abroad. Some

programs have service-learning built right into them. At many other sites, there are offices or other resources available to help you identify possible service-learning projects.

If you are considering doing your service-learning abroad, you should identify a project and fill out the online form. To complete the non-credit option, you must work with both a project supervisor in your community abroad and a UWEC faculty/staff mentor to organize, conduct, and complete the project. You can review the [guidebook for service-learning](#) and submit projects online.

MONEY MATTERS

Cost Estimate: The most current cost estimate for each program is on the [CIE website](#). The estimate includes costs you will pay to UWEC, costs you will pay directly to your host site, and additional costs to anticipate.

Final Charges: Study abroad/exchange costs are posted to MyBlugold CampS at the same time as on-campus charges:

Program Term	Charges Appear on CampS
Summer	Mid-April
Fall	August
Winterim	Late November
Spring	Early January

UWEC housing charges: If you are going abroad for spring semester and are living on-campus during the fall, the Housing Office will keep your UWEC spring semester housing charges on your MyBlugold CampS account until December. This is so that if you must withdraw from a program very late, you still have on-campus housing secured.

Payment Deadlines at UWEC

By the time you receive this handbook, you will have paid a non-refundable application fee (\$30) 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 Study Abroad Bill

Your final bill will be available for viewing on MyBlugold CampS. **Study abroad final payments follow the normal campus billing cycle.** Click here for [final payment deadlines](#).

Your final charges will be posted to your MyBlugold CampS account. You will receive an e-mail when bills are ready to be viewed on MyBlugold CampS. The \$180 you have already paid will be credited to your final bill.

To find your charges:

1. Log into your student MyBlugold CampS account
 - Choose Self-Service
 - Choose Student Center
2. Under **Finances**:
 - Choose Account Inquiry
 - 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.
 - To figure out the total amount you owe, subtract your financial aid from your total amount due.
 - If you have promissory notes or any other paperwork that must be signed through the Financial Aid Office, be sure to take care of that, also.

Your final payment amount should equal the final program charges less past payments (i.e. \$30 application fee, \$150 non-refundable deposit, **and any financial aid you have been awarded**. For example, if your final program cost is \$10,000 and you have received \$5,000 in financial aid, your final payment should be \$4,320 (\$10,000-\$180 in payments-\$5,000 in aid= \$4,820 final payment).

Pay the amount due to Blugold Central - Cashiers by the due dates listed at the link

above. For information on how to make the payment, [visit this website](#).

Costs owed to other organizations. The amount on CampS is **only what you pay to UWEC**. You can find estimates of additional costs you will pay directly to your host university or while abroad in your online study abroad account, under *Learning Content/Cost Estimates* or in your program guide.

Consequences of Payment Failure

- 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 with your delinquent balance, giving you the opportunity to set up monthly payments. If you do not respond to that letter, the Blugold Central - Business Office and Collections will begin adding collection charges and preparing them for 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 canceled.

UWEC Withdrawal Deadlines

Below are the UWEC study abroad withdrawal deadlines. **Your program may have additional, earlier refund regulations and withdrawal deadlines in addition to those outlined below.**

If you withdraw after the refund deadline, **you may still need to pay some or all of the program costs**. In addition, if you receive financial aid and withdraw or are canceled after the program begins, you may be required to

both pay back your financial aid and pay the full program costs.

Term	Refund Deadline
Summer	March 1
Fall/Academic Year	July 1
Winterim	October 1
Spring/Calendar Year	November 1

No refunds are available after these dates. **All withdrawals must be made in writing.**

Withdrawing After the Program Begins

Withdrawing from your program after the UWEC and host school semesters have begun has a number of serious academic and financial consequences. Contact your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator immediately if you are considering withdrawing. Withdrawing and outcomes are governed by the academic, registration and billing calendars at UWEC and your host institution. In the event of differences between the two, **the UWEC calendar supersedes the host institution's calendar.**

Academic consequences: Depending on when you withdraw, you will most likely either receive a "W" or an "F" for your class or classes abroad. The academic calendar of your host institution will determine what academic designation you will receive. If you withdraw after the UWEC last day to drop with no record, UWEC requires that an academic record be submitted on your behalf. Please note that the UWEC Registrar must post whatever is listed on the transcript. **UWEC cannot change a failing grade to a withdrawal even if you have compelling reasons to return early.**

Your return date in relation to the UWEC academic and registration calendar will determine if you are able to enroll in UWEC after returning home. For example, if you are participating in a fall program and return home in October, you may not be able to enroll in UWEC for the fall semester, as mid-September is typically the last day to enroll in classes without the Dean's approval.

Financial consequences: The study abroad refund deadline will have passed by the time your program begins, so you will be expected to pay your UWEC program costs. Any fees paid directly to the host institution (e.g. housing, special course fees) will be governed by the host institution's billing and refund policies. You will need to work with them to either pay your bill or to recover funds that you have already paid.

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 your host site directly for some costs, such as housing, damage deposits, or books. 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. Read carefully anything you receive directly from your site abroad, as they may be reminding you of payments due or notifying you of changes to the process.

Personal Travel

Students often ask how much money they "need" for personal travel. This varies widely. Keep in mind is that you can spend as much money as you have but you do not need to! Spending more time in your host community can be a richer experience in many ways than traveling every spare moment.

Top Student Tips: Money Matters

"Start searching for flights early so that you can save money with the best option."

“Make sure you budget your money for the entire term abroad. You may get bombarded with travel opportunities at the beginning, and you may feel like you have to make an immediate decision. Don't! Take your time to figure out what you want to/can afford to do.”

“Be sure to save some money until the end. It's always more fun to have enough for one extra weekend excursion than to be wondering if you can pay for the taxi to the airport!”

FINANCIAL AID

If you qualify for UWEC financial aid, any aid awarded to you will apply to your study abroad program. Follow the steps below.

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:

www.uwec.edu/finaid/apply/cklist.htm

Fill out the FAFSA just as if you were going to be on campus at UWEC. The CIE notifies Financial Aid of all students going abroad, and Financial Aid adjusts your financial aid budget, which is based on the cost estimates posted on the [CIE website](#). Additional personal travel you plan to do is not covered by financial aid, nor is the cost of dependents who may travel with you.

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 study abroad 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 study abroad 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 will 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 *Study Abroad Financial Aid Estimate* worksheet, available on the [Financial Aid page](#) of the CIE website, 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 and [check this website](#) for updates.

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

- You will be notified via email when a refund check is available to you.

- Checks are held for pickup in Blugold Central for 10 days. You must pick it up in person.
- After 10 days, remaining checks are mailed. You do not have to wait for your check to be mailed. Simply contact Blugold Central AFTER you receive the email and request it be mailed that day for you.
- **Keep your mailing address up-to-date on CampS so that checks mailed to you are received in a timely manner.**

Power of Attorney

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 use financial aid to pay your program expenses and you drop below full-time registration or withdraw/are cancelled from the program before completing the term abroad, **you may be responsible for paying all program costs AND most likely for paying back your financial aid.** Be sure to discuss all financial obligations with your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator **before** making a decision to withdraw.

SCHOLARSHIPS

UWEC Foundation Grants

The UWEC Foundation has a number of grants for study abroad. As of this writing you can apply for all grants administered by the CIE through the online study abroad application site. Applications open in January for summer and fall students and in June for winterim and spring students. They are due:

Term	App Due
Summer	February 15
Fall/Academic Year	April 15
Winterim/Sp/Cal Year	August 15

Blugold Commitment Study Abroad

Grants (~70 awards /year; up to \$2,000 for semester, academic year, or summer; up to \$1,000 for Winterim)

All UWEC undergraduate students

- with an EFC of \$10,000 or less
- studying on an approved UWEC study abroad program that costs more than attendance at UWEC

are eligible to be considered. You must have a current Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on file; grants will be automatically awarded with other financial aid.

Wisconsin Study Abroad Grants
(10-20/term: up to \$2,000 for a semester, not available for summer or Winterim)

Undergraduate UWEC Wisconsin resident students

- with an EFC of \$10,000 or less
- studying on an approved UWEC study abroad program that costs more than attendance at UWEC

are eligible to be considered for a Wisconsin Grant for Study Abroad. You must have a current application for financial aid on file; grants will automatically be awarded with other financial aid.

Benjamin Gilman Scholarship

Undergraduate UWEC students in good standing, who are:

- U.S. citizens
- currently receiving a federal Pell grant

are eligible to apply for the [Benjamin Gilman Scholarship](#). Approximately 2,700 awards of up to \$5000 will be made nationwide.

Additional Scholarships

Other scholarships available for your specific program or region are listed in your program guide. There may also be other opportunities for which you meet the eligibility requirements. Visit these links for additional information:

Center for International Education:
[Study Abroad Scholarships](#)

UWEC Office of Financial Aid:
www.uwec.edu/finaid/index.htm

MONEY ABROAD

Planning a Budget

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. You will receive a budget worksheet at orientation. It is also linked in the Financial Information tab of the [CIE website](#).

There is also an [online financial calculator](#) and a budget worksheet you can adapt for this purpose. The big category missing from the calculator is personal travel. If this is part of your plan for your time abroad, do not forget to budget it in!

Once you have a total on your budget worksheet, 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 find [a currency converter](#) here. You now know your weekly budget limits!

Past students who have budgeted successfully recommend that keep a daily tally of how much you spend. Be conservative at the beginning. It's always better to have a little extra for one more weekend trip at the end of the program. It's also important to know your priorities: do you really want to go out three nights a week, or would you rather have the money for some additional travel?

Currency Exchange

United States dollars or traveler's checks can generally be exchanged for foreign currency at international airports, railroad stations, and banks. You pay a commission every time you exchange money, so budget wisely!

Strategy: Several Ways to Get Money

Past participants suggest a combined approach to bringing money abroad.

Bring \$100-\$200 in the currency of your host country with you, or change that amount in the airport before heading out into the country. Be aware of your arrival time, if you are arriving late, or on a weekend, the airport bank may be closed.
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Bring a credit card (Visa or MasterCard) for purchases.

Bring a debit (cash/ATM) card for cash withdrawals.

You may want to bring some money in traveler's checks, but they are increasingly difficult to cash abroad.
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Credit Cards

If you are going to take a credit card (**strongly recommended**), Visa and MasterCard are most widely accepted. Things to keep in mind:

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

Know your daily credit limit.

Know how much the foreign transaction fee is. This is the cost that the card company charges you to make purchases in a foreign currency. Consider getting a card that has zero foreign transaction fees as they can add up quickly!

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 card for a cash advance, there are instant cash machines in many locations (see *Web Resources* in this guide for details). **You will need your PIN (personal identification number) to do this. Be sure to bring it with you, and be sure it is valid in your host country.** Most international ATMs require a 4-digit PIN.

Keep a copy of your card (front and back), so that you have all of the information should it be lost or stolen.

Debit Cards

To access cash abroad, get a debit card from your bank (cash card, ATM card) that is valid at ATMs internationally. ATM abroad will then give you the currency of the country you are in. **See the *Web Resources* section of this guide for ATM locators that tell you where your card will be accepted** or check directly with your card company for this information.

Debit cards draw directly from your bank account. Most banks charge a fee for each transaction, so take out larger amounts rather than several small withdrawals.

U.S. banks are allowed to block use of debit cards in countries where they feel “too much

fraud” has been reported by the U.S. government. This is an institutional decision and varies by bank. **Check with your bank to be sure you will be able to use your card in your host country, and in 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 information about it should it be lost or stolen.

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks are increasingly rare. Many of our partner organizations recommend that you not use them. This information is listed in your program-specific guide.

If you do bring them, they generally must be cashed at a major bank, and **you must have your passport with you.** Most banks charge a fee for cashing the checks; and can vary widely. Before cashing a check, ASK what the fee is.

Make sure you record your check numbers and keep the numbers separate from the checks, in case you need to get them replaced.

Bank Account

If you are studying abroad for the full academic year, you may want to open a bank account in your host city. You will receive details at your host university's orientation.

Online Banking

Past participants recommend online banking as a way to check your U.S. account balances. You can transfer money between U.S. accounts online. Check with your bank for details and availability.

Power of Attorney

To ensure that a trusted person at home can take care of your finances while you are abroad, you may wish to grant Power of Attorney. See the *Financial Aid* section of this handbook.

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 if the unexpected happens, it can take anywhere from 72 hours to 30 days to send money abroad, unless you have a credit/debit card. Have an emergency transfer plan worked out with your parents or another trusted person at home.

Have someone at home listed as a joint signatory on your checking account which will allow them to deposit money.

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. This works like a money order, the sender pays for it in U.S. dollars, and it is then written like a money order, but in pounds or pesos, for example. You take it to a bank and cash it. Total time before you have access to the money is 5-10 working days.

Someone at home can go to an American Express or Western Union office (often a travel agency can help) and wire money to an American Express or Western Union office abroad this generally takes 2-5 working days.
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Money can also be wired directly from a U.S. bank to a bank account in your name, if you have opened one abroad this typically takes 5-7 working days.
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Traveler's checks may provide a back-up in case you cannot get money electronically.
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Top Student Tips: Money Abroad

"Online banking is a great way to transfer money and pay credit card bills all at once."

"The grocery store is your friend! When traveling pick up a meal or two and be sure to check out fresh food in markets."

"When purchasing souvenirs ask yourself if you really need it. They can sure add up over four months, and it will be a big dent in your budget and suitcase space. It is quite costly to send packages of souvenirs home. The key is moderation."

INSURANCE

CISI Insurance

The UW-System requires all students going abroad on a UW program to carry CISI insurance, which is included in your program fee. Details are below, and contact information is on page 38. 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 CIE will enroll you in CISI coverage during the semester prior to departure.** You will receive an e-mail once your enrollment is complete.

Creating a CISI Account & Logging In

Once you are enrolled, you must login to "myCISI" to create an account and reset your password. The CIE will email you instructions for creating an account and resetting your password. You can also access these instructions online at ["myCISI" Participant Portal](#). Upon completing this step, you can manage your CISI enrollment via the "myCISI" portal. In "myCISI," you can:

- print your insurance card,
- print your proof of insurance letter for a visa application (if required for your program),
- access policy information,
- access claim forms,
- access emergency assistance numbers, and
- email information to a trusted friend or family member.

CISI Insurance Card

You will get instructions on printing your insurance card in your enrollment email. Be

sure to bring it with you abroad. Should you lose your card, you can print another copy from the "My Documents" page of the CISI portal.

Pre-Existing Conditions

Losses (medical expenses incurred) due to pre-existing conditions are covered up to \$100,000 in the 2016-2017 UW System CISI policy. 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 U.S. 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:
 - help 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 requested, try to schedule the next appointment that would fall during your study abroad.
 - 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), study abroad 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 most likely have to pay up front 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 [access a claim form here](#).

CISI Policy Exclusions

A complete list of exclusions is included in the CISI brochure on the CISI portal. One to highlight is:

High risk activities: Several high risk activities are specifically excluded from CISI coverage. In the current policy, specific exclusions include: 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 month 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 one month, no more, no less. Choose "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 UWEC 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 through Assist America. You can find details about this benefit and the emergency assistance provider, Assist America, at the [CISI portal](#) or access the "[Assist America Global Emergency Services Brochure](#)" on the CIE website by following the path [Health and Safety/Insurance](#).

Continuous U.S. Insurance Coverage

The CISI insurance will cover you abroad and includes things such as medical evacuation and repatriation insurance that are often not covered by a standard policy. However, you should 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.

Contact your U.S. health insurance company prior to your departure to see what type of coverage you will have while abroad. This is particularly important if you have any pre-existing conditions that would not be covered under the CISI policy.

HEALTH ISSUES

Overview

Your risk of becoming ill while traveling depends on location. If there are specific health concerns for your site, you will receive additional information in your program guide.

When travel in the developing world is limited primarily to tourist areas, there is less risk of exposure to food and water of questionable quality. Travelers to areas off the usual tourist routes are at greater risk infectious diseases.

“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 fluid to prevent dehydration. Your physician may be able to prescribe medication to take along for relief of the symptoms.

Before You Go

[UWEC Student Health Service](#) or your regular healthcare provider can assist you with preparation for study abroad. Schedule a travel consult to discuss your current needs, including medications, and discuss any health and safety needs while living and studying abroad. This may include medication for prevention of 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 preventative medications and immunizations that must be taken prior to travel.

Take 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 complete dental check-up
- update all routine immunizations
- follow up on any other program-specific information mentioned in your acceptance e-mail or program-specific orientation guide
- talk to your counselor or psychologist, if you see one, specifically about study 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 resources available to you through the [CISI portal](#). Once you receive notice that you have been enrolled in CISI, click on "Resources and Links" on the left side, then go to "Health & Vaccinations." Click on "Personal Security Assistance" on the left sidebar, then choose "Services" at the top of the next page. Check out the "Global Health Information".

Prescriptions

If you take prescription medication, bring enough for your **entire** time abroad. This can take time to arrange so start now!

Once you have been enrolled in CISI, they can assist with questions on accessing prescription medication. Call with the UWEC policy number and ask your question. For example, “I take *medication name* and plan to take a 5-month supply abroad with me. I will take the original prescription with 1-month’s supply in my carry-on and the other 4 months with a copy of the prescription in my checked luggage. Will this be legal for arrival in X country?” or “I am unable to get a full year’s prescription for the epilepsy medication I need to take daily while in X country. I can bring 5 months but my doctor wants to send the other 5 months. Will this be

allowed and what do I need to know about mailing 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 study abroad account.

Mental Health

If you currently see a mental health professional, speak with her/him prior to going abroad. Cultural adjustment is a normal part of going abroad, but sometimes sadness, anxiety, and/or depression may be more than culture shock. Discuss with your counselor how you might cope with these feelings.

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 Old Library 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 Study Abroad Coordinator.

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. A good record includes the names of all medications you are taking and identifies any chronic ailments or allergies. It also lists immunization history, blood type, eye-glass prescription, personal physician, health insurance, and policy number.

Travel Health Website

TravelersVaccines.com is another online resource for travel health planning, with information about health risks at specific destinations, travel health tips, and good information on planning healthy and safe travel.

Immunizations

The [Centers for Disease Control](http://CentersforDiseaseControl) (CDC) website has up-to-date information on immunizations and vaccinations for every country. **CDC recommendations should be taken very seriously.** Since the 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. Tel. (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 adviser to inquire if these can be added to your financial aid budget.

Staying Healthy

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

- **Give yourself time:** You don't have to see everything, taste everything, and go everywhere in your first few days or weeks! Allow yourself time to settle in and pace yourself with new experiences.
- **Watch what you eat:** Eat and drink in moderation for several days, 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 safe-sex precautions as you would 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. See the Safety Abroad section for details.
- **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 health care while traveling, you can use the [CISI portal](#) to find out if there is an English-speaking doctor in the area.

SAFETY ABROAD

Please see the Health and Safety tab of the study abroad website for additional information specific to sexual assault.

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 include:

Use a money belt or neck pouch: Do not carry valuables in a purse, wallet, or backpack. Wear a money belt with your passport, credit cards, traveler's checks and cash **under your clothing**.

Never carry large amounts of cash: Only keep as much cash on your person as you may need for the day.

Keep a photocopy of your passport and visa: The copies should be separate from the originals. In addition, leave a copy with the CIE and someone at home. Copies will help you obtain a replacement passport in the event your passport is lost or stolen.

Always leave your travel itinerary with a friend or family member: They know where to find you in the event of an emergency at home. It also helps locate you in the event you do not arrive at your next location on the expected day and time.

Take precautions: 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: In many countries, drug use is subject to stringent laws and penalties can include long prison sentences or even a death sentence. Neither claims of ignorance nor your status as a U.S. citizen protect you from such laws. If you are reported using illegal drugs during a program, all of the usual UWEC disciplinary processes, including suspension from the program or expulsion from the university, may apply, and you may have charges under the Blugold Code upon return.

If you drink, do it responsibly: Many countries have laws against public drunkenness, and a drunk person is an easy target for a criminal. Just as at home, alcohol is often a factor in acquaintance rape, theft, and assault abroad. And drink-spiking can also occur abroad. Always watch your drink being made or poured and keep an eye on it at all times. If you choose to drink, do so in moderation, respecting yourself and others.

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 in some places transportation accidents.

Do not fight with a mugger: Just as in the U.S., 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 and/or the police immediately.

Crime Victim or Arrest Abroad

If you are the victim of a crime or if you are arrested abroad, notify the program coordinator at your host site 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.

Please see the "Health and Safety" sidebar on the [CIE website](#) for more complete information on sexual violence prevention and response information for study abroad students, provided by UWEC Counseling Services staff.

Safety in Your Host Country

Safety in and around your host city will be discussed during your orientation abroad. 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](#).

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

Shortly before the beginning of your program, CIE will enroll you in 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 you via email 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 Terrorism

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 or university logos, U.S. flags, etc.).
2. Stay away from "typical" U.S. hangouts abroad (McDonald's, Hard Rock Cafes). If you need to visit a U.S. Embassy, fine but don't hang around just to see it.

3. Maintain a low profile. 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 electronics.
4. Do not stop in the street to be "interviewed" or "surveyed" by anyone. This is usually a cover for theft.
5. Cooperate 100% with the international staff at your host site and follow their advice. If they say to stay away from somewhere, do it!

Emergency Contacts

All UWEC programs have an on-site contact person who is available for consultation if difficulties arise. You will receive an emergency contact card at orientation; be sure to keep it in your wallet at all times. The information is also on 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 coordinator for help. Remember that you have 24-hour assistance through your CISI insurance. Find all details at the CISI portal: www.culturalinsurance.com or access the "[Assist America Global Emergency Services Brochure](#)" on the CIE website by following the path *Health and Safety/Insurance*.

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 also offer some assistance to U.S. citizens abroad. You can find a complete list of U.S. Embassies abroad on the CISI portal or at www.usembassy.gov. 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 UWEC

Why Report? If you or a friend experiences a health or safety incident abroad, we strongly encourage you to report the incident to the CIE.

1. Most importantly, reporting allows the CIE to provide you or your friend 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 study abroad programs under the Clery Act. Your report will help the CIE 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 study abroad 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 UWEC study abroad programs:

- Aggravated Assault
- Arrests
- Death
- Sexual Assault
- Sexual 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 through a [report form](#) found on the study abroad website: www.uwec.edu/cie/studyabroad. Go to *Health and Safety/Incident Reporting*. This form allows you to report an incident anonymously or to provide your name and contact details.

You can also report an incident by contacting your UWEC study abroad coordinator and providing 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

Your coordinator may then ask you some follow up questions to identify appropriate support and complete the reporting process.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Passport

If you followed the instructions e-mailed with your acceptance letter, you already have your passport. If you do not have one, **please apply for one 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. Give the CIE one copy for your file. Leave one at home with your family when you go abroad. 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. 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 e-mail, on the phone, or in person.**

The CIE will provide basic immigration information, along with visa instructions and an application form/link to an application form if needed, as part of your pre-departure preparation. It is your responsibility to keep up-to-date about student visa requirements for your host country and, if required, to apply for and receive a visa from your host country's consulate or embassy.

Therefore, it is important that:

1. You remain calm and flexible throughout the visa application process.
2. If you receive information about visas from your host institution that is different from what you received at orientation, **follow the instructions from the host institution.** Please notify the relevant Study Abroad Coordinator of this information, since it is frequently sent only to the student.
3. 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.
4. Become a Facebook or Twitter follower of the Consulate/Embassy of your host country as many issue visa updates via social media.

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!

Visas 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. Non-U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to use a visa processing company as the visa rules and requirements are often different for citizens of other countries. CIE staff may not be aware of all the different rules and requirements that apply to non-U.S. citizens.

If you are an international student, contact UWEC International Student Services as well, to let them know, as they may have additional paperwork they need to sign in order for you to return to study at UWEC.

Visa Processing Companies

The CIE will provide you with basic visa information, but CIE staff cannot offer immigration advice or call the consulate on your behalf. If you have a lot of questions about your visa application, and your host country allows it, consider using a visa processing company.

Visa processing companies charge a service fee in addition to the host-country visa fees. Service fees vary between companies, the type of visa (i.e. student vs. work), and whether you are pursuing regular or expedited service.

Below are the names and web addresses of two visa processing companies that may be able to assist you. Please address questions directly to the companies.

Perry International
Web: www.perryvisa.com
Phone: (312)-372-2703
Email: Perry@perryvisa.com

TraVisa
Web: www.travisa.com
Phone: (312)-588-7215 or (800)-665-0602

Email: chicago@travisa.com

PACKING TIPS

These are general suggestions. Your program guide contains information specific to your site, and you will receive a packing list at orientation.

Rule number one of international travel: **pack light**. The week before you leave, pack everything you think you need 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** (i.e. passport, immigration documents, medicine, anything you could not do without for a few days) in **checked luggage**. Have important documents and money in a money belt and allowable personal items in your carry-on: 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](#) 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.)

Luggage

Most airlines operating international flights permit you to check one piece of luggage free. There will be a charge for the second piece of luggage. Requirements vary by airline; verify them with your travel agent or the airline itself. A weight limit is set for each checked bag. You are also generally allowed one carry-on. Be aware that airlines have become very strict about carry-on luggage.

Past participants highly recommend bringing a backpack as one piece of luggage, particularly if you plan to travel quite a bit while abroad. A suitcase with wheels or a collapsible luggage carrier can also be useful. It is 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, found on the Contact Page of your program guide. You do NOT want your home address on your luggage tags, as you do not want 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

Take clothing that is machine washable and does not wrinkle easily. Choose a color scheme and bring mix-and-match clothing that can be layered. Dark colors show dirt less quickly when you travel.

Past Student Tips: Packing

"Bring half of what you really want to bring!"

"Think practical, not fashionable. If your clothing is not comfortable, you won't be comfortable."

"Comfortable shoes are essential, since traveling usually entails lots of walking."

"Pack some basic essentials: hangers, school supplies (notebooks, writing utensils, scissors, folders, flash drive, tape, post-its, calculator) and personal items. Then you can leave these things behind, making room for souvenirs."

COMMUNICATION

When you were accepted to study abroad, you signed a Statement of Study Abroad Participation. One of the things you agreed to do is **check your UWEC e-mail account at**

least weekly. Almost all communication will be sent via UWEC e-mail, and often this communication will require a response.

Before You Go

Contact your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator or peer adviser **UNLESS** you have a question arising from an e-mail sent directly to you from your host university/organization.

If you get an email from your host site, read it carefully. They may be informing you of a new procedure you need to follow, or they may be asking you to return a new form or send them additional information.

If you have questions, send them to the host site's email, and copy the UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator for your program.

Because universities abroad consider students to be adults, they often do not copy the UWEC study abroad staff on communication to you, so unless you copy us on your response, we will not know what information you have received or what questions you have about it.

While Abroad

If the question has **anything to do with the host site**, such as housing, getting into classes, medical care, field trips, etc., **contact the on-site program liaison.**

If the question has to do with UWEC/UWEC regulations about study abroad, or, if after you have contacted the appropriate person on-site, you still have questions or concerns, contact your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator.

Blugolds Abroad: While you are abroad, you will receive an online newsletter with information you should be thinking about during your program. Again, the newsletter will be sent to your UWEC e-mail address.

Upon Return

Again, contact your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator, **UNLESS** you have a question arising from an e-mail sent directly to you from your host university/organization. In that case,

reply to the sender, but copy your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator as well.

E-mail Etiquette

E-mail is an effective tool for getting answers to questions about your study abroad program. However, **e-mail is viewed differently in different cultures.**

E-mail Format: You are using e-mail as a means of formal communication. It will often form the first impression staff members here and abroad have about you. In a chat room or on Facebook, the style of communication is often very informal and sometimes quite aggressive. **This is not an appropriate tone to take in intercultural e-mail communication.**

Be sure you:

- Put a specific subject in the subject line. For example: "Study Abroad Cost Question."
- Use a greeting for each new e-mail topic. (If you exchange several e-mails on the same topic, it is like carrying on a conversation, and a greeting is not needed each time.)
- Use capitalization and punctuation in the same way that you do in formal writing.

Response Time: In the U.S., people tend to respond to e-mail within a day or two. Some people even check and respond to work e-mail in the evenings or on weekends. **This is NOT the case in most other countries.** E-mail is simply one more communication tool. Business e-mails will be attended to during business hours, and **a response time of a full business week is not unusual.** Even when you e-mail a question to a UWEC study abroad staff member, we may need to check with a colleague abroad before giving you an answer.

E-mail Tone: Intercultural communication can often be frustrating, because people start with different assumptions or understand common terminology differently. Misinterpretations happen very easily even in neutral e-mails because there may be a language barrier, and there is definitely a lack of nonverbal expression to cue the recipient about your motives and

intentions. **It is very important to be sure you are not "angry" in an intercultural e-mail.**

Here are some questions to ask yourself before sending off an angry e-mail:

- Would I say this to the person's face?
- What impression is the receiver going to form of me?
- How would I feel if I received this e-mail?

If you are uncomfortable with any of your responses, take a few deep breaths and try a different approach. **Your ultimate goal is clear and open communication.** Venting may feel good for a moment, but the result may be to alienate someone who would be a good resource before, during or after your time abroad.

UWEC Webmail

In order to receive official e-mails from UWEC while abroad, for registration, billing, etc., you **must be using your UWEC e-mail address**, or you **must have forwarded your UWEC e-mail account to the web-based account you are checking.** Instructions for forwarding your UWEC e-mail account can be found on the [Helpdesk](#) website.

Be sure to **re-set your UWEC e-mail password before going abroad.** If your password expires or you forget your password while you are abroad, you will need your PIN or the last four-digits of your social security number to reset your password. PINs cannot be given out over the phone or via email.

Cell Phone

If you have a cell phone, check with your provider about a temporary international plan until you have time to figure out what plan may work best for you at your host site. It will also give you cell phone access while traveling, in case you are delayed and need to notify the host site, or to call your parents to let them know you have arrived safely.

Calls or Texts? With many phone plans and providers, it is cheaper to text than to call internationally. Check with your provider to

find out what calls and texts will cost you from your program site.

Questions to ask your cell phone provider:

- Will my phone work in my host country?
- Does it make sense to buy international voice, text, and/or data?
- How do I turn off my data (or whatever else you will not use) to avoid charges?
- When and for what will I be charged? What additional fees should I expect?
- Would a "disposable" or pay-as-you-go phone make more sense?

Pre-paid phones: Some students choose to buy a pre-paid cell phone while abroad, rather than bringing a cell phone. "Pay as you go" phones are an inexpensive option. Such plans allow you to communicate with other students on the program and local friends and roommates. Providers and plans will differ with each program site.

Other Options

Calling cards: Calling cards are another option for calling home if your site has a phone available for student use. There are many providers and rates, so some research may be necessary to find the best deal! When you buy calling cards, make sure to read the fine print. You want to make sure you are calling from "outside the U.S." and "into the U.S."

Skype: If you have a laptop, [Skype](#) is good for inexpensive international calling and can be downloaded for free off the internet. All you need to make a phone call is your computer, a headset, and a microphone. If you call another computer that has Skype, the call is free. If your computer has a camera, you can also video chat.

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

Communication apps: Viber, Text+, WhatsApp are apps that you can download free to a handheld device and/or computer to make

free international texts and/or calls over Wi-Fi..

Blogging: There are many different blog generators that you can use including www.blogspot.com which works through a Gmail account.

On-site options: Communication options at your site are included in your program guide.

Keeping in Touch via Social Media

Friends and family want to hear about your adventures abroad, and social media makes keeping in touch easy. Having a clear communication plan will make life easier for everyone.

First, 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. Agreeing upon expectations for communication 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, particularly if they don't understand the context.

Your online persona may follow you forever: Employers are increasingly looking to social media to get the "real story" about job applicants. That funny drunken post of today may mean not getting a job tomorrow.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Purchasing Tickets

It is your responsibility to make travel arrangements to your host site.

- Information about dates and airports will be in your program-specific guide, or e-mailed to you when available.
- See the appendix of this handbook for more information and guidelines on booking.
- Consider traveling with another program participant, a travel companion can make arrival in a new country much less intimidating!

The cost of your airline ticket is your responsibility. **You may wish to purchase travel or trip cancellation insurance** when you buy your ticket in case your plans change unexpectedly. Discuss your options with your travel agent and know exactly what the policy covers. (For example, most policies specifically exclude travel disruption due to acts of war.)

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, contact any airport official in the baggage claim area. Fill out a *Lost Luggage Claim* with your address abroad, 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

Many host sites offer some form of organized travel, whether required or optional. Details are in your program guide. You may also wish to take advantage of your time abroad to do some personal travel. **Remember that this is not an essential element of a successful study abroad program.** Often students who stay in their host community and make connections there through volunteering or getting involved in student organizations have the richest experiences, ones that they can build on in the future.

Guidebooks

Travel guides such as Let's Go, Rough Guides, and Lonely Planet receive good comments from study abroad participants and are available at

any major bookstore. Both the University library and the Eau Claire public library have several if you wish to compare before you buy.

Hostels

Youth hostels provide an economical alternative to hotels for the budget traveler. Hostels have varying regulations and restrictions. Some impose curfews, some require that you have your own sheets, etc. Many will require that you have an International Youth Hostel pass. For more information, call the Hostel International/AYH national office at (240) 650-2100 or visit their website at www.hiusa.org.

Advice from a past student: *“When it came time to plan my travels, I set up the hostels first. AYH is quite reputable, but sites such as www.hostelworld.com, www.hostels.com, www.hotels.com (which had some cheap hotels that were 'hostel-style') were also helpful.”*

**A tip for staying in a hostel--bring your own sheets. Sew two sheets together so they look like a sleeping bag. Attach a pocket to put a pillow in. This allows you to sleep in something clean.*

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Studying abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. It can 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 see page 28.**

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? The psychological discomfort which we feel is commonly known as “culture shock.”

Reactions to Cultural Differences

Culture shock is a logical reaction to differences we encounter in a new 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 because you don't belong.
- Rejecting the new culture and people as being strange.
- Learning to decipher foreign behavior and customs.
- Accepting and enjoying the new culture.

Our reactions to these various phases will influence how we relate to local citizens. Being excited about 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 reading list 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.

- Do the culture learning exercises and readings that your Peer Adviser will send you via email.

A Sense of Purpose

Have a clear idea of what you specifically want to accomplish by going abroad. The goal setting exercise you will do during orientation and over the course of the semester will help you define your priorities.

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 months. 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/e-mailing 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 powerful learning tools. You gain self-understanding and personal growth, as well as insight into what it means to be an American and into how the rest of the world's population lives and thinks. Bad moments (even days) are often 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.

PREPARING TO COME HOME

UWEC Campus Housing

If you are abroad in the fall and plan to live on campus in the spring when you return, e-mail the appropriate hall director to find out what you need to do. You can find the hall directors' e-mails at www.uwec.edu/housing/index.htm.

If you will be abroad in the spring, you will be notified directly via email by Housing and Residence Life when room sign-up takes place and whom to contact. Room sign-up typically takes place in late February/early March.

Upper Campus Parking

If you are abroad in the spring, will be living on campus the following fall, and want to apply for the Upper Campus Parking Lottery, you will need to contact Blugold Central during the week that lottery applications are being accepted, typically in late April.

Tie Up Loose Ends

Make sure you've paid library fees, turned in keys, made copies of syllabi, turned in a

transcript request, whatever it is your host site requires you to do before leaving -- so that they can send us your transcript when it is ready. You don't want to have your transcript held up because of something you forgot to do!

REENTRY

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 coming home can be more unsettling than going abroad was. There's even a term "re-entry shock" to describe the way many returned students feel in their first weeks, or months, back home. The 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. Common symptoms of re-entry shock include:

- experiencing difficulty readjusting to the home culture
- missing some aspect of the study abroad experience
- 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 I changed as a result of studying abroad?
2. How might things have changed at home during my stay abroad?
3. How, if at all, has my identity changed? How might I accommodate this new identity back home?

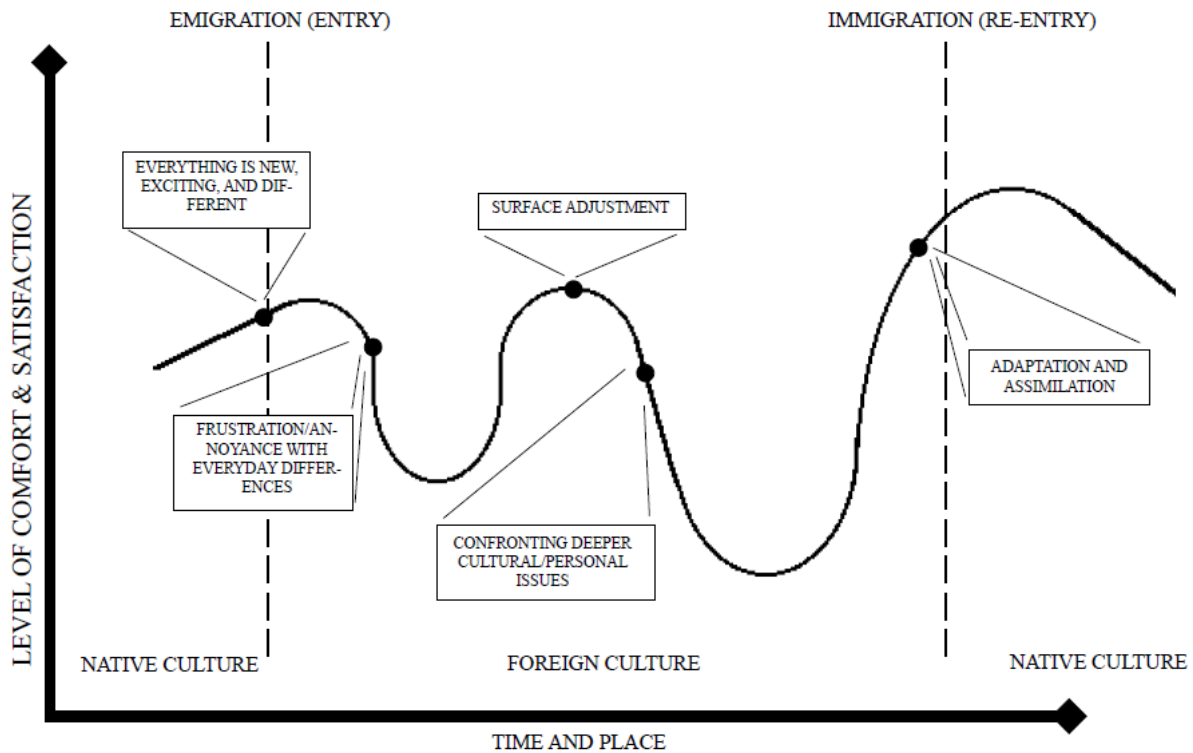
Please refer to the CIE website for useful links, videos, and articles regarding re-entry shock. On the left sidebar, go to *Returned Participants*.

The CIE also hosts events for returnees of UWEC study abroad programs. Make sure to keep up to date with these events and more by reading your e-mails. Global Outlook, the CIE e-newsletter for study abroad returnees, will be sent to your UWEC e-mail address monthly during the academic year. Liking [our Facebook page](#) also allows you to keep up with all of our activity before, during and after you're abroad!

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) Organize your photographs into an on-line album
- 4) Become an International Classroom Speaker
- 5) Promote your study abroad program
- 6) Correspond with friends in your host country
- 7) Take internationally-focused courses
- 8) Join an internationally-focused student organization
- 9) Follow online news from your host country
- 10) Start planning how you might go abroad again!

Cultural Adjustment Curve



USEFUL NAMES & ADDRESSES

Center for Int'l Education	Other UWEC Offices
3 Schofield Hall Tel: 715-836-4411 Email: studyabroad@uwec.edu Web: www.uwec.edu/cie/studyabroad	BLUGOLD CENTRAL Old Library 1108 Tel: 715-836-3000 Email: blugoldcentral@uwec.edu General questions about your student account, financial aid, registration, etc.
Courtney Brost (brostcn@uwec.edu) Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Semester at Sea, South Africa, Spain, Mexico	For questions about how classes you are taking abroad will transfer back to UWEC, please begin by consulting the Transfer Credit Wizard: https://transfer.uwec.edu
Jenna Krosch (kroschjm@uwec.edu) Australia, France, Ghana Greece, Japan, Sweden, Educators Abroad Student Teaching	COUNSELING SERVICES Old Library 2122 Phone: (715) 836-5521
Cheryl Lochner-Wright (lochnebc@uwec.edu) Austria, Germany Ireland, Italy, United Kingdom (England and Scotland)	UWEC AFTER HOURS NUMBERS In an after-hours emergency , you can call one of these numbers and the University police will contact a CIE staff member. Leave a message if there is no answer; someone will be in touch shortly. (715) 839-4972 or (715) 577-9045
Colleen Marchwick (marchwcc@uwec.edu) Interim Lead of the Center for International Education	
<div style="text-align: center;"> CISI INSURANCE 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 E-mail: medservices@assistamerica.com </div>	

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Following is a list of travel agents, airlines and travel booking websites that UWEC students have used in the past. This is by no means an exhaustive list it is simply a starting point. You will probably want to call several agencies/check several on-line agencies to find the best price. Keep in mind that advance booking is required, so call soon!

POSSIBLE TRAVEL AGENCIES/WEBSITES*

Higgins Travel

715-834-2686

www.higginstravel.com

Student Universe

www.studentuniverse.com

STA Travel

1-800-781-4040

www.statravel.com

Qantas

www.qantas.com.au

United Airlines

www.united.com

Travelocity

www.travelocity.com

American Airlines

www.aa.com

Delta Air Lines

www.delta.com

Icelandair

www.icelandair.us

Kayak www.kayak.com

Travel Hub

www.travelhub.com

*The agencies/websites listed are for your convenience. They are in no way endorsed by the Center for International Education.

Note that while you may find better prices on-line, working through a travel agency can be helpful in the event of airline strikes, flight cancellations or other unanticipated travel changes. **You may also wish to purchase trip cancellation/travel insurance.** Discuss your options with your travel agent.

Keep in mind that advance booking is required, so begin exploring your options soon! **Don't forget to turn in your ARRIVAL INFORMATION either to your host site or to the CIE as soon as you have booked your flight.**

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MAKING RESERVATIONS

Do not make flight reservations until your program dates have been confirmed by your host site.
You must maintain program eligibility requirements through the semester prior to your departure in order to participate. Other unexpected circumstances may also force you to change your plans. Wherever you choose to book your ticket, be sure it has a low cancellation fee. (Note that a non-refundable ticket means just that--the airline or agency will not refund anything if you do not use the ticket.)
Be sure to buy a ticket with a low change fee. Change fees can run anywhere from \$50 to \$350 or more. International flights tend to be on the higher end of the range from \$250 to \$300.
Changing your return date is subject to seat availability.
It is generally less expensive to fly on weekdays than on weekends.
You may be able to get a better price if you are willing to take a less direct route.

When calling travel agents or searching online, you will need the following information:

- 1) The date you plan to ARRIVE in the country
- 2) The date you plan to DEPART from the country
- 3) If you have an **International Student Identity Card**, have the number handy. The best fares available are generally student or youth fares. Travel agents use the ISIC card to verify your eligibility for these fares. If you find a fare that requires the ISIC card, you can usually get one through the travel agency, or through the CIE.

ONLINE AGENCIES

Below are questions to ask as you review a site to help ensure that the online agency you are dealing with is reputable:

1) Is this website approved by the Better Business Bureau Online (BBB Online)?
2) Are transactions secure? Look for Verisign or TrustE insignias, which assure users that privacy policies and SSL encryption are in place.
3) Does the Website clearly post a privacy policy and terms of use?
4) Does the Website “bait & switch” customers? Are rules for the purchase of deals clearly displayed?
5) Is there a customer service center that can be contacted in case of questions or emergency? Try calling them before you book, to see if the phone is actually answered.
6) Who does the Website partner with? Have you heard of these partners?
7) What airlines would you be flying on? Are they well known carriers?
8) Are the route and itinerary clearly displayed, and is there enough time to make connecting flights?
9) What are the rules, restrictions and penalties for ticket cancellations or changes? Can these be made directly with the carrier?
10) Is the site understandable and easy to use? A website is an online shop, and the quality of the website is a testament to the company’s commitment to their product.
11) Does the website sell ARC endorsed tickets and/or e-tickets? These are the best way to go online, because the agency has paid for the ticket completely prior to departure. Some student travel agencies will sell their own paper tickets for air travel and reimburse the airlines only after the customer’s travel is completed. If the agency goes bankrupt, this can cause many problems for the ticket holder.