

Semester Abroad Programs: Parents and Families FAQs

What should I know about my student's health and safety while they're abroad? Additionally, how does insurance work for them during their time overseas?

Health & Safety Resources (including Insurance)

Even before a student departs to study abroad, an important consideration to remember as they're preparing to go, they should be working with their home doctor and insurance provider to ensure that any prescriptions the student takes regularly should be filled to cover the length of their stay overseas. Students should not count on getting their prescriptions mailed to them overseas in the event that they lose them or run out before they're finished studying abroad (due to not getting enough before they left). Medical prescriptions WILL be held up in customs, so make sure to work with your student's doctor and insurance company to have enough of their prescription(s) procured before they leave. Additionally, any prescriptions students need to take with them abroad should ALWAYS be packed in their carry-on item to avoid the potential of their checked baggage being lost or delayed upon arrival. Though we review this with students during their mandatory pre-departure meeting near the end of the semester before departure, please remember that this is an important item to complete prior to leaving.

During the mandatory pre-departure meeting, we provide them with the necessary steps to take in the event of an emergency, as well as ways to stay healthy and safe while abroad. This information can also be found in the Study Abroad Student Handbook, which students receive at the pre-departure meeting. Additionally, we provide parents and families with their own handbook and pre-departure packet via email to better prepare them for their student's time overseas. Students will also be receiving information about a pre-departure meeting from their specific program to participate in before leaving, and students are required to participate in their host program's in-country orientation during the early days of their time abroad, as their 24/7 emergency contacts and local phone numbers will be provided during their first days abroad.

Students should ALWAYS contact their on-site program staff first in an emergency at any time of the day so that they can receive the most immediate assistance available. Their on-site staff will be able to speak the local language should the student need to go to a hospital, see a doctor, or contact a local mental health counselor. It is imperative that you and your family realize the importance of having your student utilize the on-site staff, as this is a major function of their role with the program in which your student is participating. Programs will inform us if an incident involving one of our students takes place overseas, and we will ensure they have contacted you as well.

If your student needs to go to their local hospital or see a local doctor, they should make sure their on-site staff are aware and can accompany them to assist with translations if necessary. Students should also make sure they're following the guidance of utilizing their in-country insurance by their on-site staff, which is typically reviewed during the in-country orientation. While students need to maintain their current status on a U.S. health insurance plan even when they're abroad, they will be provided with a supplemental insurance plan if they're participating on a program with a third-party provider. Students who have decided to participate in a direct partner program will need to purchase their own supplemental insurance plan to meet their host country's health insurance requirements and will receive more information about the options available for purchase from Bryant University, or our direct partner institution. Students may need to pay out of pocket for some services- even with supplemental insurance- and they should

retain receipts they receive. Then, they can submit a claim and include their receipts for reimbursement afterwards. Their on-site staff can also assist with how to complete this claim process.

Students will also receive recommended checklists to complete before leaving, packing tips, healthy tips for flying long distances, and more during their pre-departure process from both Bryant and/or their program. There are several resources we provide them with that are also available for you to explore as you continue to assist them leave for their time overseas and will be included in the parents and families' pre-departure packet we provide. Some of these resources below are just a sampling of what students are given.

[State Department's Travel Website](#) (country-specific information can be found through this page and is included in your student's pre-departure packet we provide them)

[Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \("STEP"\)](#)

[U.S. Students Abroad](#)

[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\): Traveler's Health](#) (country-specific information can be found through this page also regarding vaccinations and travel health notices)

What will be the best way to Communicate with my student while they're studying abroad? How can I help them deal with Homesickness and FOMO about things back home?

It is only natural for students to want to connect with their family and friends while they're overseas, and being able to communicate with them while they're abroad is indeed important. Various video call apps such as FaceTime, What's App, or Zoom allow you to visually connect with them during their time away. International calling plans are commonly used by parents and families to communicate with students abroad, especially if Wi-Fi is unavailable in a particular area. Additionally, we're always interested in having bloggers or vloggers, which is another great way to see what they're going through while simultaneously helping them to capture their experiences to reflect on later. If you believe your student would want to do this for our office, we appreciate any encouragement you can give them to sign up when we send out a call.

While we encourage students to keep in touch with their loved ones during their time overseas, we also want them to not spend too much time on their social media or constantly texting/calling back home. They are only abroad for a set amount of time, and they should be using that time to get to know their host city and culture. We know that students are going to be encountering homesickness while they're abroad- it's all part of the study abroad experience. Bryant's Office of Counseling Services speaks with them during our pre-departure meeting about the roller coaster of emotions students typically go through while they're studying abroad. However, sometimes students don't realize they're experiencing this when it's happening. Additionally, students will have FOMO (fear of missing out) during different points of their time overseas, especially if they're spending their free time pouring over their friends and family's social media posts about life back home.

We recommend to them (and your support in this is crucial) to limit their time on social media and use their time abroad to explore and become the best version of themselves. It goes by faster than they'll realize, and before you know it- they'll be home and perhaps wishing they were

abroad again! A great way for students to help deal with homesickness is asking their friends and family to write them letters or emails when they're experiencing this feeling overseas. Even if you and your family can visit them while they're studying abroad, having letters or email to save and read if they feel homesick again can help them finish out their time abroad with a sense of accomplishment and justification that they are stronger than they may have been when they started on this journey.

Are there any specific things that we should be aware of and/or help our student do before they leave to study abroad?

Your student has received a checklist we provide them with during their pre-departure meeting, and we make sure to include this same checklist to parents and families in their own pre-departure packet. Below is the checklist students and parents/families will receive from Bryant. Students should also be receiving additional information from their respective program regarding location-specific packing guidelines, electric currency considerations, and more.

One thing that would be good to complete before your student studies abroad is to obtain Power of Attorney from them, as noted on the checklist below. A Power of Attorney will be invaluable if medical or financial decisions/assistance is needed while your student is abroad. Depending on your student's home state of residence will depend on the exact forms/documents that need to be collected and signed. Rhode Island's Power of Attorney form can be viewed [here](#), and can serve as an example of what to look for when obtaining one in your own student's state of permanent residence. International parents and students should research the equivalent forms/process in their home country.

Pre-Departure Checklist for Study Abroad Program Participants

- Contact your bank(s) to notify them of your upcoming travel dates for your semester abroad and inquire about affiliated banks that are in your host country to avoid paying higher fees throughout your time abroad any time you need to withdraw money.
- Make copies of all documents (e.g., passport copy, license), COVID vaccine card, bank cards (front and back), etc. Leave a copy of all documents at home and have a copy of all documents for yourself.
- Register with S.T.E.P. through State Department (U.S. Citizens only): <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- Work with your program on the visa process and questions you might have about it.
- Complete Power of Attorney paperwork.
- Arrange for bill payments to be made while abroad (if applicable).

- Contact your cell phone provider to discuss plan options (e.g., International plan).
- Work with your doctor and insurance company to ensure you'll have enough of your prescription(s) for your time spent overseas.
- Read up on your soon-to-be host country!!! (See country notes provided in your pre-departure folder).
- Read all other pre-departure materials provided by Study Abroad Office and your program.
- Make sure your flights are booked for the correct dates (as per your program's information about start and end dates of your program).
- Have a note in your phone and a hard copy of your emergency contact numbers (program, parent(s), etc.)
- Pack your bags several days before, thinking about what you truly need and have room for, so you are not stressing out about it at the last minute. Be sure to leave plenty of room for souvenirs and DO NOT over pack!
- Pack several adapters/electrical currency converters for your host country/region.
- Obtain some cash of your host country's currency to have with you upon arrival in country in case you can't use a debit/credit card.

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**What if my student has a documented disability or needs special accommodations due to learning? How can they ensure that this will be taken into account and their needs will be met?**

A key factor to know about students with disabilities and studying abroad is that the Americans with Disabilities Act is specific to the United States and is not something that is recognized worldwide. Students' study abroad programs should be made aware of any documented disability/accommodation necessary even before the student applies for their program. Ultimately, the program will be able to work with a student and let them know if the location that has been chosen will work well for the student or perhaps consider a different location that would be more user friendly based on the student's needs. Unfortunately, due to the architectural structures likely to be found abroad in some of our destinations, not all our approved locations are well suited to accommodate certain kinds of disabilities. Therefore, students may need to accept that a particular destination they may have their heart set on to study abroad in is not necessarily going to be the best option for accommodating certain disabilities.

If the student already works with Access Services at Bryant, they should also make sure to meet with the Director of Access Services and provide them with the program contact information so that a meeting about the student's accommodations can be discussed for the term abroad. Several

Bryant students have been able to successfully study abroad with their respective accommodations, and sometimes, it's a letter from our Director of Access Services to the host institution abroad that is required for the student to receive similar accommodations to what they receive at Bryant while abroad.