

Texas A&M International University

# Study Abroad Handbook



Office of International  
Engagement  
STC 124 | 956.326.2282  
[www.tamiu.edu/international](http://www.tamiu.edu/international)

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# General Information

The Office of International Engagement (IE) will guide students throughout every stage of their study abroad process and experience. For any questions, students may contact IE.

Office of International Engagement Contact List		
Name	Title	Email
Triana Gonzalez	Director	<a href="mailto:Triana.gonzalez@tamiu.edu">Triana.gonzalez@tamiu.edu</a>
Cynthia Martinez	Associate Director	<a href="mailto:Cynthia@tamiu.edu">Cynthia@tamiu.edu</a>
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Office Location: Student Center 124 Office Number: 956.326.2282 Office Email: <a href="mailto:international@tamiu.edu">international@tamiu.edu</a>	Social Media: - Facebook – txamiu.study.abroad - Instagram – txamiuabroad - Snapchat – txamiuabroad - Twitter - txamiuabroad	

**Information Session Notes**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study Abroad Program of Interest:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study Abroad Application Session:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study Abroad Application Deadline:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Advisor Approver:** \_\_\_\_\_

**College Approver:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SA Scholarship Presentation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TAMIU SA Scholarship Deadline:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Funding Your Study Abroad  
Workshop:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Departure Orientation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Important Dates:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Important Travel Sources

### U.S. Department of State: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

- Foreign country information
- Passport application and fees
- Visa requirements
- Travel warnings
- Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)
- Study Abroad

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

- Vaccines
- Area specific precautions
- Health preparation for travel

### Currency Converter: [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)

- Exchange rates and conversions

### Health Insurance: [www.culturalinsurance.com](http://www.culturalinsurance.com)

- Health insurance information
- Email: [cisiwebadmin@culturalinsurance.com](mailto:cisiwebadmin@culturalinsurance.com)
- For contact information, look at the back of the insurance card.

# Study Abroad Application Process

Study abroad is an exciting opportunity for students to discover the world, languages, cultures, and people while advancing in their academic degrees. Study abroad encourages students to get out of their comfort zone and enter the unknown. Through this experience, students can learn about different subjects, see where history took place, network, gain a competitive edge at the academic and professional level but most importantly become independent and discover themselves.

To initiate the study abroad process, students must attend a study abroad information session. During the session the following information is covered: participation/admission requirements, choosing a program, applications, scholarships, passport and visas, financial planning, program payment and withdrawal process.

After the information session, students must research the available programs and notify IE of their program selection. Once the program has been selected, applications and required documents must be completed and submitted to IE.

Study Abroad Application Checklist	
	Attend an information session
	Research programs
	Choose a program
	Attend the Study Abroad Application Session
	Start study abroad application and set up required appointments
	Submit study abroad application - seek proper approvals
	Apply for a passport
	Attend the Funding your Study Abroad Workshop
	Apply for study abroad scholarships
	Create a financial plan for study abroad expenses
	Understand program and study abroad payment deadlines
	Review study abroad handbook and policies

## Study abroad admissions requirements

Students must meet the following requirements to be admitted into a study abroad program:

- Be in good academic standing – 2.0 Institutional GPA or higher
- Be in good disciplinary standing
- Have a TAMIU GPA
- Must be 18 years or older at the time of the program departure
- Must have completed or in the process of completing an academic year at TAMIU
- Must be approved by academic advisor and college
- Must be applying to valid, credit offering program
- Must be approved by IE

\*Students interested in participating that do not meet study abroad requirements may be reviewed on case by case basis for admissions.

## Choosing a Program

At the moment of researching programs it is very important for students to consider the following:

- Program type
- Program duration and dates
- Program cost and inclusions
- Course offerings
- Program location
- Language requirements
- Housing requirements

At TAMIU there are three different program types – Exchange, Affiliate and Faculty-led.

### Exchange Programs

TAMIU has established academic exchange agreements with universities in various parts of the world. Students from both institutions are allowed to participate in academic exchange. Students that are interested in participating in an exchange with a partner institution must complete the following:

- Request IE to submit nomination to exchange institution
- Must complete and submit 2 study abroad applications
  1. TAMIU study abroad application and 2. Host Institution exchange application

Once accepted into the exchange program by TAMIU and the host institution the student must apply for housing, visa/residency permit, register for courses, among other items that may need to be completed. Students participating on exchange programs pay TAMIU tuition and fees. Depending on the program, students might pay housing and meal plan charges to TAMIU.

### Affiliate Programs

Students are allowed to participate in study abroad programs hosted by affiliate company providers. Students that are interested in participating in an affiliate program must complete the following:

- Must complete and submit 2 study abroad applications
  1. TAMIU study abroad application and 2. Affiliate program application

Once accepted into the program by TAMIU and the provider, the student must apply for visa/residency permit, register for courses, among other items that may need to be completed. Students participating on affiliate programs pay the program cost to the provider.

### Faculty-Led Programs

During the winter, summer and spring break study abroad programs led by TAMIU faculty are organized. Students that are interested in participating in a faculty-led program must complete the following:

- Must complete and submit the TAMIU study abroad application

Once accepted into a faculty-led program by TAMIU the student must apply for visa/residency permit, register for courses, among other items that may need to be completed. Students participating on faculty-led programs pay TAMIU tuition and fees and the program cost to TAMIU prior to departure.

## Course Approvals

Students are required to enroll for academic credit courses during their study abroad program. During the application process students must select the course(s) they will enroll in. Depending on the program type, approval from faculty, academic advisor and college dean are necessary. The following is needed for course approvals:

### Exchange Program –

- Student must research courses offered at host institution
- Student needs to assess what the selected courses can be transferred back as depending on his/her degree plan
- Student must set up a meeting with their academic advisor
- Student must take a copy of their degree plan, list of host country courses and the descriptions of the courses when meeting with the academic advisor
- Once courses are reviewed and selected the academic advisor signs the advisement form
- The college dean will review the courses and sign in approval

\*Students must understand the host program's credit system at the moment of selecting the courses to ensure they complete the credits they have registered for at TAMIU.

### Affiliate Program –

- Student must research courses offered by the program
- Student needs to assess what the selected courses can be transferred back as depending on his/her degree plan
- Student must set up a meeting with their academic advisor
- Student must take a copy of their degree plan, list of host country courses and the descriptions of the courses when meeting with the academic advisor
- Once courses are reviewed and selected the academic advisor signs the advisement form
- The college dean will review the courses and sign in approval

\*Students must review the credit system and contact hours at the moment of selecting the courses to ensure that the courses selected meet the requirements of TAMIU and their enrollment.

### Faculty-Led Program –

- Student must set up a meeting with the faculty leading the program for approval
- Academic advisor and College Dean must sign application for approval

Note:

\*If the student needs to modify their course selection while abroad, they must contact IE and their academic advisor for approval.

\*Students should not take core curriculum courses at a university abroad.

\*If the student wishes to add or withdraw from a course, they must notify IE.



## **Financial Planning and Scholarships**

Students participating on study abroad programs have the opportunity to use their financial aid and apply for additional scholarships (if applicable).

### **Financial Aid**

It is important to meet with a financial aid representative to go over and understand how aid can be used for study abroad purposes. Students should also inquire with financial aid in regards to additional funds available. Students must also be aware of financial aid disbursement dates and complete any required forms.

### **Scholarships**

Study abroad scholarships are available for students participating on these programs. TAMIU offers institutional scholarships solely for study abroad students. External scholarships are also available. Students must be cautious of eligibility requirements and deadlines. A list of scholarships can be found on the TAMIU study abroad webpage.

### **Budget**

When planning to go abroad students must have a realistic budget in mind. Students must know the actual program cost and be aware of additional expenses. Although scholarships are available, students should not rely on scholarship funds at the moment of planning their study abroad program budget. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they have enough funds to pay for their program by the deadline and make payment arrangements with the business office if needed.

## **Withdrawals and Cancellations**

If at any point in the study abroad process a student wishes to withdraw from participating in the program it is important they notify IE and submit the Study Abroad Withdrawal form. The withdrawal form is found online. The student must submit this form in order to be officially withdrawn from the program. The form can be found in the following link - <http://www.tamtu.edu/international/withdrawal.shtml>

The student will be responsible for any program charges depending on the stage of the study abroad process and/or dates listed on the study abroad payment agreement. The student must return any study abroad scholarships awarded to their account. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they are dropped from the study abroad course(s).

If a program is cancelled by TAMIU the students will be notified via email and given guidance towards the necessary steps. If the program is cancelled, the student will be returned the study abroad application fee.

### **24-Hour Cancellation Policy**

After submitting the TAMIU study abroad application, you have 24 hours to cancel your application with no penalty should you decide not to participate. If canceling within the 24-hour grace period, you must submit the Study Abroad Withdrawal Form online at <https://tamtu.wufoo.com/forms/study-abroad-withdrawal-form/>. The 24-hour grace period begins at the time your application is submitted.

# Post-Acceptance

Once the student is accepted into the study abroad program additional steps must be completed to prepare for the program and experience.

Post-Acceptance Checklist	
	Submit required documentation accepting admissions to the program
	Understand the participation requirements and rules
	Apply for housing
	Obtain health insurance
	Submit Health information
	Passport and visas
	Book your flight
	Attend pre-departure orientation
	Course registration
	Research your host country

## Study abroad participation requirements and rules

Each student enrolled at TAMIU is responsible for being fully acquainted and complying with TAMIU's Student Handbook. You can find this handbook online at:

<http://www.tamtu.edu/scce/studenthandbook.shtml>.

Study abroad programs are University-sponsored activities and, as such, all of the terms and conditions of student conduct as outlined in the Student Handbook apply to study abroad students. By accepting admission to a TAMIU study abroad program, students agree to be responsible for their own health, safety and behavior while participating in the program. In addition, students commit to observing and obeying the TAMIU Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct, the laws of the State of Texas and the United States of America, as well as the laws of the host country and host institution.

Violations of any of the conditions set forth by TAMIU may result in expulsion from the program and forfeiture of program fees. If, for just reason, the faculty and/or program coordinator considers the student to be continually disruptive, or in violation of university rules and regulations, disciplinary action will be taken and the student may be dismissed from the program. Just reason includes violations of student responsibilities, conditions set forth in the Student Handbook/Code of Conduct, and/or the laws of the United States and host country. Student will be afforded due process (in accordance with the Student

Handbook), which includes an opportunity to respond to charges.

Prior to taking action which adversely impacts a student's participation or status in a study abroad program, the faculty and/or program coordinator must:

- Provide notice to the student about the nature of the problem
- Give the student an opportunity to respond (explain) and correct the problem
- Communicate the consequences of failing to correct the problem, i.e. dismissal from the program.

Arrest for violations of host country laws may result in immediate dismissal from the program. TAMIU will assume no responsibility for finding the student legal counsel. The faculty and/or program coordinator will contact TAMIU Police Department or IE. TAMIU will then alert the US Embassy, and notify the student's family of the arrest, in accordance with FERPA Guidelines.

### **Communication with IE**

For questions, inquiries and/or any matters related to study abroad, students are encouraged to visit, call and/or email IE. Students are required to use their dusty email. IE will only send information to the student's university email. Students should check their university email on a regular basis as IE will be sending information in regards to their program and the study abroad process.

### **Housing**

Housing accommodations vary depending on the program and host institution. Housing options include: homestays, residence halls, apartments, and hotels/hostels. It is important that the student is aware of the housing option for their program. An application and deposit may be requested depending on the program. If the program requires a housing application, the student must apply as soon as possible since housing is limited in certain locations.

### **Homestays**

Homestay housing provides the student with the opportunity to fully immerse in the culture by living with a family from the location the program takes place. The student will hopefully learn more about the host language, culture, traditions, food and daily life. It is important that the student knows the expectations and rules of the host family. A student must keep in mind the following when living with a host family:

- House rules
- Curfew
- Meal schedule
- Present family with a small gift
- Communication prior to arrival
- Be polite, thankful and understanding

### **Health Information and Insurance**

All students studying abroad are required to visit Student Health Services and Student Counseling and Disability Services before their travels. During their visits they will be informed of recommended vaccines, health issues related to the area, traveling with medications/prescriptions, environmental and relational stressors and helpful tips to stay healthy while abroad.

To further prepare for the program abroad the student should visit their physician for a check-up. The student should describe allergies, disabilities, psychological treatments, dietary requirements, and medical needs so that adequate arrangements can be made. This information should also be shared with IE. Resources and services for people with disabilities vary widely by country and region; therefore, it is important to know ahead of time what accommodations can and will be made to assist the student. If a student has a medical condition, they should take a copy of their medical or dental records. With advanced notice, the program may be able to provide contact information for appropriate medical specialists.

Students are required to have health insurance during their study abroad programs and it is highly recommended that they have health insurance for their entire stay abroad. IE will enroll students in the Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) plan. The student will then be assessed the insurance fee unless fee is already included in program cost. Depending of the program location, the student might need to pay the hospital or physician directly and then request reimbursement from the insurance company. For more information visit CISI - <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/>.

## **Visas and Permits**

All students must have a valid passport in order to travel abroad. Students can apply for a passport at IE or go to the U.S. Department of State website to see passport facilities by city. If the student already has a passport, they must make sure it will be valid for the duration of their program. Some countries require that the passport be valid for 6 months after the program end date.

Students must submit a copy of the identification page of their passport to IE. It is recommended to leave a copy at home. If the passport is lost while abroad, the student needs to report it to the local police and get written confirmation of the report. The following documents must be taken to the nearest embassy/consulate to get a new passport - two passport photos, passport number, date and place of issue, and a certified -NOT photocopied- copy of your birth certificate or an expired passport.

Some countries require entry visas or residency permits. The student needs to research the entry requirements of the country(ies) he/she is visiting by checking with the appropriate consulate or embassy. Visit the U.S. Department of State Consular Information Sheets, to obtain details of visa requirements and links to foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S, by typing in your destination country. ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov))

## **Flights**

Students must make their travel arrangements ahead of time. Once accepted into the program and all entry requirements have been completed, the student should book their flight. Some programs include airfare and therefore IE will book the flights. It is encouraged for the student to purchase trip cancellation/interruption insurance when buying airfare. When purchasing the flight, the student must be knowledgeable of the program start and end date. It is important to keep in mind the travel time and carefully analyze layovers and airports. Students must send IE their complete roundtrip flight itinerary.

# Before Departing

Prior to departure the student needs to make sure that everything is set for their study abroad program at home, home institution and abroad.

Before Departing Checklist	
	Submit required documents
	Research host country
	Pay for program and courses
	Attend pre-departure orientation
	Register for STEP
	Set up communication plan
	Pack for program

## Pending Documents

Students must visit IE to ensure all required documentation has been received and that no other documents are pending. Other offices that students should visit are: Financial Aid, Bursars, Registrars and their academic advisor.

## Program Payment

All program payments and payment arrangements should be done before departing on the program. It is important that the courses are paid before or by the deadline, to avoid being dropped. If the student is dropped from the program course for non-payment, they will be automatically reinstated and charged the reinstatement fee in addition to the tuition. The reinstatement fee is dependent on the credit hours the student is registered for.

Students should also be aware of financial aid refund disbursement dates and plan how the funds will be transferred into their bank account being used abroad. The student must verify if the BankMobile card works in their host country. The BankMobile card or bank account transfer for the refund should be set up prior to departure to avoid not being able to access the funds.

## Pre-departure Orientation

All students participating in a study abroad experience are required to attend pre-departure orientation. During this session students will be educated on safety, health, international travel, academics, rules,

emergency procedures and other related topics. This session will help them prepare for their program and time abroad.

## **Prepare for departure and program**

### **Know host country**

Aside from attending pre-departure orientation, it is important to research the country and location the program will take place. Knowledge of the host country will assist with reducing culture shock. It will also educate the student about politics, history, holidays, sites, laws, religion, family, language, social norms and more.

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

The Department of State has STEP available for all U.S. citizens travelling abroad. Once registered the traveler is sent information about current events going on at the country they are visiting. Enrollment in this program makes it easier for the US Embassy or Consulate to contact and assist the student in case of an emergency or crisis. <https://step.state.gov>

\*If not a citizen of the U.S., the student's home country may have a program similar to STEP. If a similar program is available, students are responsible for enrolling.

### **Money Matters**

Students should inform their banks of their foreign travel to avoid having security holds placed on their accounts. They should also see if the bank charges foreign transaction fees. Sometimes these fees can be removed or reduced if informed ahead of time. It is recommended for students to have more than one source of funding. Students must research what credit/debit cards work in the host country. Having host country currency upon arrival is important. Local banks can assist with exchanging U.S. dollars for the currency needed. This should be done with ample time.

### **Personal Documents**

Students should make copies or scan to their emails the following documents:

- Passport
- Visa
- Insurance cards
- Credit card information
- Identifications

A copy should also be left at home in case of an emergency or if a document gets lost.

### **Communication**

Setting up a communication plan is crucial prior to departure. Students can search for international phone plans, ask providers for charges while abroad and/or download communication applications. Applications should be set up and tested before departing.

Having a communication with your family and friends is necessary. Family and friends should be informed of the time difference and what works in the location of the program.

## Small Appliances/Electricity

Electrical current in countries may be different from the U.S. Research the electricity, voltage and the adapters/converters that can be used by visiting [www.voltagevalet.com](http://www.voltagevalet.com). Converter and adapter plugs can be bought at drug stores, electronic stores, online, and department stores.

## Packing

When packing it is important to have knowledge of the type of weather in the location the program will take place. Knowing the program itinerary will assist in the packing of appropriate attire. Students should be aware of local dress codes. Other countries may dress more formally or conservatively than Americans. Research the norms of the destination and pack lightly.

Some packing tips from study abroad students:

- If you hate to lose it, don't bring it.
- Do not take valuable jewelry.
- Leave extra space in bags for souvenirs.
- Never pack essential documents, medicine, or items in checked luggage.
- Never carry large amounts of cash.
- Take only credit cards that will be used.
- Keep a separate list of credit/debit cards and emergency replacement contact number and procedures.
- Have insurance information at all times.
- Mark all luggage - inside and out - with name and address. Mark bags in some distinctive way, so they are easily found. Purchase TSA approved locks for luggage and backpack.
- Contact lens solution and an extra pair of lenses
- Special medication (any prescriptions needed, in labeled bottles with a written prescription)
- A small backpack for day trips
- Comfortable walking shoes

Pack a medical kit. Included in the kit should be: band aids, alcohol pads, sunburn ointment, anti-diarrhea medication, antibacterial ointment, and pain reliever. Depending on the region, it can be recommended to take antihistamines and insect repellent. Packing regular medications and other routine health and medical products is very important. Student should research what medications or medical items are allowed in the country.

# While Abroad

While Abroad Checklist	
	Report arrival
	Check in at least once a month
	Email IE your foreign address and contact information
	Know location and important emergency numbers
	Attend program orientation
	Enjoy experience

## Checking in

Upon arrival students are required to inform IE of their arrival to their host country. Students must provide their foreign address and phone number to IE. They should also inform IE of the courses they have registered for and submit a copy of the course syllabus. Students should constantly check their university email accounts to see if any notifications have been sent from TAMIU or IE. IE will be sending monthly emails to check the status of the students. Students must reply to the email so that IE confirms the status of the student. In case of a natural disaster, unfortunate event, or other it is of extreme importance that the student checks in with IE to confirm they are well. Be informed of what is going on back home and at TAMIU. Know the dates for registration, scholarship and financial aid deadlines.

## Title IX: Sex Discrimination and Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments and TAMIU rules prohibit discrimination in educational programs and activities offered by the University based upon sex. Sexual harassment, including sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination and is therefore prohibited under Title IX. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it unreasonably interferes with a person's work or educational performance or creates an intimidating or hostile environment. The following are examples of types of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment:

- Inappropriate touching, patting, or hugging
- Nonconsensual sexual activity
- Invasion of sexual privacy
- Obscene phone calls, texts, emails, photographs, or gestures

Any person (student, faculty, staff, or guest) who believes that discriminatory practices have been engaged in based upon sex may discuss their concerns and file a complaint of possible violations of Title IX with the TAMIU Office of Compliance:



Lorissa M. Cortez  
Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Title IX Coordinator  
5201 University Blvd. – KL159B  
Laredo, TX 78041  
956.326.2857  
[lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu](mailto:lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu) or [TitleX@tamiu.edu](mailto:TitleX@tamiu.edu)

Or contact:

Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office)  
U.S. Department of Education  
1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620  
Dallas, TX, 75201-6810, (214) 661-9600

TAMIU does not discriminate or permit harassment against any individual on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity in admissions, educational programs, or employment.

## **Culture Shock and Homesickness**

Culture shock is experienced by most travelers. It is a sense of personal disorientation due to experiencing an unfamiliar way of life or environment. Students may experience culture shock through cultural gaps, language barriers, food, customs, homesickness and other factors.

In order to reduce culture shock the following can be done:

- Read and talk with others who have traveled about dealing with culture shock and homesickness
- Think about the strategies already used to deal with stress
- Talk with friends and family about how to stay in touch

When experiencing culture shock it is recommended to:

- Go out and explore
- Go on local tours
- Observe, get a sense of norms of behavior
- Talk to people
- Make connections, make friends!
- Ask a local, why, how, etc...
- Be slow to judge; think about what people would do in your country in the same situations
- Do not forget your sense of humor!

## **Academics**

Study abroad is an academic program. All students must be registered for classes that offer academic credit. Before departing, students must register for the appropriate courses and the correct credit hours at TAMIU. Once they arrive at their program, students must ensure they register for the correct, pre-approved courses and make sure they are registered for the correct amount of credit hours. This will allow us to pre-evaluate the study abroad courses and how those may transfer back to TAMIU. It is the responsibility of the student to enroll in courses with TAMIU and if applicable with the host institution/program. The systems and traditions of higher education can vary greatly around the world and in the universities where we have programs. It is important that the student gets familiar with the host institution's grading and credit system. Students may not take core courses if participating in an exchange or affiliate program. Students participating in a TAMIU faculty-led program may take a core course.

Once registered at TAMIU and with the host program, the student must verify the correct credit hour enrollment and email IE course descriptions or syllabi. If for whatever reason a student registers for other courses than the ones that were pre-approved in the advisement form IE and the academic advisor must be notified. Failure to register and/or complete the amount of hours the student is registered for at TAMIU abroad will result in receiving an "F" letter grade on the missing coursework and will not be able to retake the course(s). If during the program the student needs to make modifications to his/her course load, IE must be notified so that assistance can be provided to the student. If a student would like to add/drop a course, IE can check if changes can be done to the TAMIU course registration in a manner that will not affect the student. This is subject to the TAMIU registration timeframe.

If attending an exchange or affiliate program, within a month of program completion the student must submit coursework and syllabi to IE. Once the official transcript is received a memo will be sent out to the academic advisor for course equivalency approval. Students will receive a letter grade for all coursework completed abroad. Failure to submit coursework and syllabi within a month of program completion will result in the student receiving an "F" for every course taken abroad until coursework is submitted. Academic courses completed abroad will be included in the student's TAMIU transcript.

#### General Differences

- In most countries, students' degree studies are restricted to one faculty and focus no more than one or two departments, because degree students begin choosing their academic focuses in secondary school. Thus at the time students enter college, they already possess an extensive background in the subject(s) they plan to study. Whereas most U.S. colleges and universities strive to give students a well-rounded education, universities in other countries expect that students will already have a broad range of knowledge as a result of their high school education.
- Each region has a different credit system than the U.S.; therefore, students should take the time prior to departing and registering to learn the numbering and credit system for their home country. This pre-departure work will help to ensure that the student enrolls for the correct coursework.
- Continual assessment is rare. At most universities, all or most of a class grade is based on the final exam or one large essay. Multiple-choice tests are unusual, with even science courses requiring essay exams.
- Professors do not usually monitor a student's individual academic progress. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with the class work and to approach the professor with any problems or concerns.

### Early Termination of Program

In the event that a student voluntarily/involuntarily terminates their program participation early the following will be affected:

- Course completion/Final Grade\*
- Scholarship funds
- Program cost

Early program terminations will be reviewed on a case by case basis by IE.

\*Course completion/final grade is at the discretion of the faculty.

### Emergency Information

Students need to familiarize themselves with the location of the nearest U.S. Embassy. It is also beneficial to follow the embassy on social media to stay informed of current issues and events. To find embassy locations visit – [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov)

Knowing the location of hospitals and pharmacies abroad is of importance in case of an emergency. During the program on-site orientation students should be provided with this information or they can ask for it. Students can also look for the information with their insurance.

Contact information for program coordinators and advisors should be requested upon arrival and be kept handy in case of a situation. In case of an emergency, contact the program coordinator abroad and local police. Also, it is important to notify TAMIU PD at 956.326.2911 or IE at 956.26.2282. Family and relatives should be informed of who to contact in case an emergency at home. Provide the contact information for International Engagement and TAMIU PD, in addition to the contact information of the study abroad program or host university.

\*For sexual misconduct such as sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence, UPD may not be the appropriate first point of contact. In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act, the victim of the sexual misconduct has the right to decide whether to contact US law enforcement. UPD may be the first call, if the victim has stated that he/she would like US law enforcement to be contacted. If the victim does not want US law enforcement to be contacted, the first point of contact should be the TAMIU Title IX Coordinator, Lorissa M. Cortez, who can be reached at 956.326.2857 or [lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu](mailto:lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu).

## **Safety**

International Engagement will register students who are U.S. citizens with the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to inform them which U.S. citizens are abroad, where and when. Furthermore, TAMIU Police Department is provided with a list of all students abroad, as they are your primary contact at the university during an emergency situation.

### **Money and Valuables**

It is recommended not to carry large amounts of cash around and instead carry major credit cards. Keep passport and money safe in a money belt or small purse that can be worn underneath clothing. If wearing a purse or travel bag, ensure the pockets are secured by a zipper, or clasp.

### **Personal Safety**

While abroad, students should take the same common-sense safety precautions when at home: be aware of surroundings and keep valuables concealed. Many travelers fall victim to crimes because it is assumed they are carrying cash, and in a foreign environment, they are often easy to distract. Be prudent when meeting strangers, and listen to safety advice from program coordinator and local residents. If a student is a victim of crime they need to contact the embassy. Every embassy and consulate has a duty officer on-call around the clock to assist in an emergency.

### **When Traveling**

- Student should inform their program coordinator, classmates and/or family of their travel plans.
- Keep an eye on bags and personal belongings at all times.
- Be alert in crowds at train stations, crowded shopping areas, and tourist spots.
- Make sure when planning trips the arrival is during the day and not late at night.
- When traveling, always sleep with money belt or neck safe hidden under clothing.
- When staying at a hotel, make use of the safety deposit boxes that many hotels have.
- If driving, keep car doors locked and suitcases out of sight. – it is not recommended to drive in foreign countries due to having no knowledge of traffic laws.
- Do not leave valuables in parked cars. Thieves target rental cars and cars with out-of-town or foreign license plates.

- At the same time, two are safer than one. Do NOT go with any strangers.

## **Alcohol Abroad**

In the United States, the official legal drinking age is 21--higher than it is in other countries. Attitudes towards alcohol consumption vary greatly from country to country. Know the local rules and customs, use moderation and good judgment, and remember that drinking may place a person at risk because it reduces awareness and ability to judge potential dangers. Excessive consumption of alcohol has been identified as the single greatest risk factor for study abroad participants.

## **Avoiding Sexual Assault**

Most sexual assaults involve people who know each other. These tips can help identify danger and protect a person in any situation.

### **Basic Tools**

- Stay alert.
- Trust intuition.
- Avoid secluded or unknown places.
- If a person feels in danger most probably they are in danger.
- Know the emergency number.
- Be aware of the effects of alcohol and drugs. Alcohol and drugs impair judgment and increase violent behavior.
- Don't be afraid to call attention for assistance.

## **Self-Defense**

### Tips at home

- Always keep windows and doors locked.
- Don't let strangers into room or apartment.
- Notify the police immediately of anyone that might be suspicious.
- At night, close drapes, shades, or blinds.
- Never provide home address to a stranger on the phone or over the internet.
- Be cautious about posting personal information on the internet.

### While walking

- Use a steady, confident pace.
- Lower the volume or remove headphones to hear what is happening around.
- Carry keys on hand to get in quickly into home.
- Keys can also serve as a defense weapon if attacked.
- Wear comfortable shoes

## **Law/Behavior**

Police represent the authority of the government directly in many countries. Be respectful of authority and of local laws. Alcohol and drinking are treated very differently abroad generally. In some countries wine and beer are served as a part of meals regularly. For these reasons drinking does not represent a "right of passage" abroad as it often does in the U.S. Remember: drinking is usually a part of festivities, but not

the object of festivities. Excessive drinking may result in penalization. Driving under the influence is, in most other countries, met with much stiffer penalties (including several years of mandatory jail time) than it is anywhere in the United States.

Drugs of any type and in any quantity are dealt with more severely in most countries than in the United States. If convicted, one can face sentence of 2-10 years in many countries; a minimum of 6 years hard labor and a stiff fine in some countries; the death penalty in a few countries. Just being present when someone is found to be in possession is sometimes enough to get arrested. So, if someone else is breaking the law, LEAVE! Some Americans who travel somehow have the illusion that they are under special rules and/or the illusion that the nearest American consulate can take care of things for them. The consulate can assist with getting a lawyer and notify family and school, but cannot get someone out of jail. Students participating on study abroad programs are representing TAMIU and the United States.

## Upon Return

The process of study abroad does not end upon return. Further steps must be completed to conclude the study abroad program.

### Coursework and Grade Transfers

Students must submit course syllabi and unofficial transcript to IE upon return if they have not done so during their program. Once the coursework is submitted IE will work with academic advisor and the Office of the University Registrar to properly transfer the coursework done abroad. Coursework will not be transferred until the official transcript is received. Failure to submit coursework and syllabi within a month of program completion will result in the student receiving an "F" for every course taken abroad until coursework is submitted.

### Reporting Arrival

Contact IE upon arrival to notify them that you are back in Laredo or in home country. Meet with IE to inform them about program and study abroad experience.

### Re-integration to TAMIU

We know from experience of many students returning home from study abroad that it is not always easy to fit right back into the life they left at home (also known as reverse culture shock). This can be upsetting because we think we should easily adjust back to our own culture. Many students experience an adjustment period somewhat like they did when they went abroad. It is important to talk to someone about reverse culture shock. Get reintegrated by:

- Visiting family, eating favorite foods, and seeing familiar places.
- Get into old routines.
- Share international experience with others and even join organizations
- Attend the Study Abroad Get Together to meet study abroad students and share your travel experiences and talk about adapting.

### Study Abroad Service Hours

Students that received TAMIU study abroad scholarships are required to complete service hours. A hold will be placed on the student's account and will remain active until the hours are completed. This hold will

not allow the student to obtain a transcript or get their diploma. These hours are to be completed before graduation.

Students are required to submit their study abroad hours for approval through Trailblazers and complete the study abroad service hours form. Submission through Trailblazers will facilitate the tracking of hours completed.

Students can complete their service hours by completing the following:

- Post photos/videos on IE's social media
- Become an International Student Mentor
- Instagram Challenges
- Assist at IE Office or events