**Parent Guide to Study Abroad**

**PARENTS/GUARDIANS/FAMILIES SHOULD:**

* Be informed about and involved in the decision of the student to enroll in a particular program.
* Obtain and carefully evaluate participant program materials, as well as related health, safety and security information.
* Discuss with the participant any travel plans and activities that may be independent of the program.
* Engage the student in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues, insurance needs, and emergency procedures related to their time abroad.
* Encourage the student to be responsive to requests from the program sponsor for information regarding the student.
* Keep in touch with the student while abroad but also allow the student time to adapt and manage themselves in the foreign environment.

**WHY YOUR STUDENT SHOULD STUDY ABROAD?**

* Adds to full UWG experience -- can satisfy Experiential Learning requirement!
* Encourages student to become more comfortable with ambiguity
* Expands one’s global network
* Increases cross-cultural competencies
* Fulfills academic, personal, and professional goals

**THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION ABROAD CAN ASSIST BY:**

* Offering information about study abroad
* Professionally advising students about international activities while attending UWG
* Helping your student prepare to go – shared responsibility, your student has homework too!

**THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR CAN ASSIST BY:**

* Providing specific program details
* Acting as the main point of contact after program selection

 **FINANCING STUDY ABROAD:**

* Students can use financial aid and scholarships toward credit-bearing experiences
* HOPE/Zell Miller works like regular UWG courses
* Program fees vary by program
* Scholarships are available, visit the Office of Education Abroad [scholarship](https://www.westga.edu/academics/education-abroad/scholarships.php) website for more information

**MITIGATING RISK ABROAD:**

* Faculty-led programs hold pre-departure orientation meetings
* All students registered in UWG programs are automatically enrolled into robust insurance policies through CISI
* UWG does not sponsor programs or activities in countries with a Travel Warning issued by the U.S. Department of State (Travel only to regions of level 2 threat grade and lower)

**YOUR STUDENT’S PROGRAM:**

* Course offerings, grades and credits, financial costs, academic and program structure, housing type, requirements, etc. all vary based your student’s program type:
	+ UWG Faculty-Led
	+ Exchange Abroad
	+ UWG Independent Experience
	+ Non-UWG Program
* Ask your student what program they are interested in or attending, and work with them to familiarize yourself and them on the specifics of their experience.

**PRE-STUDY ABROAD:**

* Students can be excited, anxious, overwhelmed, stressed – talk to them about how they are feeling
* If desired, join them for an advising appointment
* Check-in with them about their requirements/budget – are they fully prepared to go?
* Determine what your level of communication with your student will be while they are abroad
* Will you be visiting your student? If so, discuss your expectations for the trip
* Research the destination culture and location with your student
* Assist the student in obtaining a passport…and visa, if necessary.
* Discuss health and safety proactively – what precautions should your student take?
* Ask what their goals are for the experience!

**WHILE YOUR STUDENT IS ABROAD:**

* Allow time for your student to get settled – travel is exhausting, don’t worry if they aren’t in communication right away!
* Find a level of communication that works for you both, but give them their space – over communication with home can make it difficult for students to adjust to their present situation.
* Encourage them to engage with their host culture
* For longer duration programs, send letters or care packages
* Culture shock is an on-going process – listen to their frustrations, but remain positive and supportive, be patient with them, and remind them of their goals
* Remind your student to provide updates on their travel itinerary, especially for any side travel – this will help us to reach out to them in case of emergency!

**SUPPORT FOR THE PARENTS/FAMILIES OF STUDENTS:**

* Know that your student’s safety is UWG’s #1 priority with international activities
* Due to Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), UWG employees may not discuss a student’s information – encourage your student to be in contact with us
* In an emergency, UWG will reach out to emergency contacts as allowed by student
* Ask your student about Pre-Study Abroad Orientation and whether parents are invited to attend

**UPON RETURN FROM ABROAD:**

* Students can be excited to come home, but may have difficulty readjusting
* Listen to their stories and ask to see pictures
* Your student’s interests, habits, and world outlook may have changed – and that’s okay!
* Encourage your student to integrate their new hobbies/interests into their pre-study abroad life
* Take an interest in their new interests, ask questions
* Be patient with your student – they are trying to process a meaningful experience, and may experience extreme emotions during this transition period.