Isabella Cannon International Centre

Semester Study Abroad
Student Handbook
Fall 2010
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I. Introduction from the Dean of International Programs

Congratulations on your decision to study abroad and on your acceptance to your program. Your semester abroad will likely be the best semester of your college career. Expect some times of frustration and confusion while you’re abroad, but hopefully you will return with a better understanding of another culture, the world and yourself.

Preparation is the key to enjoying and benefiting from a semester abroad. This handbook is designed to help you prepare for your international experience. No handbook can answer every question. We hope you will come to the Isabella Cannon International Centre (ICIC) if you need additional information before departure and will go abroad prepared to discover answers on your own.

Studying abroad is a privilege that carries responsibilities on your part. Travel and living abroad involves many details – booking flights, obtaining your passport and visa, researching necessary immunizations, making arrangements for your housing at Elon for when you return, working out your class schedule, determining which courses will count towards fulfilling your academic requirements, and so on. Attending to these tasks, and more, is YOUR responsibility, not your parents’ responsibility. The ICIC is here to help, but you must be ready to do your part.

Study abroad can bring uncertainty and unexpected events, most very pleasant, but others more challenging. It is important that you learn to navigate through unfamiliar situations with **flexibility, tolerance, preparation and awareness.** Keep your knees bent and your mind open. Remember that you will be a guest in another country and your behavior will not only reflect on yourself, but also on Elon University and the United States. The value that you obtain from your semester abroad will be directly related to how much ownership you take for it.

Your first task is to read and become familiar with the information in this handbook. If you have any questions or if there are topics you feel have not been addressed, please come to the ICIC. We wish you every success on your semester abroad.

Safe travels,

_Woody Pelton_
Dean of International Programs
II. Contact Information

A. Emergency Contact Information

The Isabella Cannon International Centre, located in Carlton 113, is open Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm. An ICIC staff member also has a cell phone on his/her person for true emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isabella Cannon International Centre</th>
<th>Phone (M-F, 8am – 5pm US EST)</th>
<th>336-278-6700</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency</td>
<td>336-278-5555 (Campus Police)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>336-278-6692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will also be provided with an emergency card during one of your orientations or upon arrival abroad. This card will list contact information for ICIC, the US Embassy or Consulate closest to your program location, and on-site program staff. In an emergency, you should **ALWAYS contact the on-site program staff FIRST**. They are your best resource and will be able to address the situation much faster than anyone in the United States.

B. US Embassies and Consulates and Registering with the US Department of State

It’s a good idea to research the nearest US Embassy or Consulate to your program location. US Embassies and Consulates abroad may be able to help if you’ve lost your passport, need to evacuate the country, or get in touch with someone in the United States. They can also help during natural disasters, political crises and other emergencies. The Students Abroad website is an excellent resource that explains what embassies can and cannot do. Please visit [http://studentsabroad.state.gov](http://studentsabroad.state.gov) for more information, as well as [http://usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov) to research the US Embassy or Consulate within your host country.

Furthermore, as you will be spending a semester or more abroad, you should register your travel and residence information with the US Department of State. This information will allow the Department of State to assist you in an emergency, and allow you to receive updates from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. Please visit [https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/](https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/) to register.

III. Academic Information

A. Courses

Part of studying abroad is experiencing an academic program in a different country. You will likely find differences in the size and structure of the classes, teaching methods, assignments, grading, independent learning, time spent in class and ideas presented. While Elon assures the quality of the instruction abroad, it is not our goal to convert foreign institutions to the Elon mold. Generally, courses abroad require more student initiative and have less frequent assessment than Elon courses; therefore, it is your responsibility to keep up with the material covered. You can research your specific program’s academic culture by visiting the program website or meeting with an advisor at the ICIC.
B. Registration for Your Semester Abroad

*Elon Centre Programs (San Jose, Costa Rica; Florence, Italy; and London, England)*

The course selection for the Elon Centre programs is available on the ICIC website and will be given out at one of the program-specific orientations. Note: Minimum enrollment must be met for a course to be offered. Meet with your academic advisor to discuss which courses you will take on the Centre abroad program. You will then complete the Course Planning Form and submit it to the ICIC. ICIC staff will register you for your classes abroad. You will not register through OnTrack for your semester abroad.

You will be able to drop and add most Centre abroad courses during the first week of classes. Note: There are a few courses that cannot be dropped or added during this period. Registration drop/adds should be communicated to the ICIC via the Elon Faculty in Residence during the drop/add period.

*Affiliate and Exchange Programs*

If you have been officially accepted by the program at the start of pre-registration, **do not** register for any courses. The ICIC will register you for 16 hours of placeholder credit. If you have not yet been officially accepted into the program at the time of pre-registration, you should register for classes at Elon for the next semester. Your academic advisor will need to grant you access to register as usual. Once you are accepted into the program, the ICIC will register you for the placeholder credit and drop you from the courses for which you are registered at Elon.

You are required to meet with Robin Straka, Assistant Registrar, to have your possible courses approved. The Course Request Form – Elon Affiliated Study Abroad Program is also available online at [http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/international_studies/studyabroad/forms.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/international_studies/studyabroad/forms.xhtml). Robin Straka will explain the course request process during the course request session. This form must be signed by you, your academic advisor and Robin Straka in the Registrar’s office.

*Changes to Approved Courses (Affiliate and Exchange Programs)*

Take a copy of the course request form approved by your academic advisor and the assistant registrar with you, as you may need to have this on hand should the course availability change once you are in country. If you are unable to take the courses that were initially approved by the assistant registrar, you will need to contact her and/or your academic advisor to discuss how your new courses will count at Elon. Keep and bring back copies of materials related to your courses, including syllabi, exams, papers, notes, projects and portfolios, as they may be needed to determine the credit granted for the course.

C. Registration for the Semester You Return to Elon

You will register for courses for the following terms through OnTrack, just as you do when you are on campus. You will be assigned registration times based on semester hours completed. Please remember that registration times are at Elon (EST), not the local time at your study abroad location. Your individual registration times will be available through OnTrack when semester schedules for the term are posted. Refer to your Course Planning Form or Course Request Form, and consult with your academic advisor at Elon as you plan your schedule. Elon faculty are also available to students at the Elon Centres to assist in course planning.

You are strongly encouraged to register for courses through OnTrack. If you will not be able to access OnTrack during the registration period, staff in the ICIC can register you for classes.
Details will be sent ahead of preregistration. ICIC staff cannot guarantee that your schedule will be entered during your first assigned registration time slot.

D. Grades
You will receive grades and credits for all approved courses you take while you are abroad. You CANNOT take a course pass/fail. Grades will be calculated into your Elon GPA. For students on affiliate and exchange programs, your international transcripts may take several months to arrive, so please be patient. Once we receive your transcript, we will put the courses and grades into your Elon transcript.

E. Honor Code and Social Policies
While you are abroad, you are still held to the Elon University Honor Code and social policies, just as on Elon’s campus. Remember, you are representing yourself, your university and your country, so you are expected to behave in a responsible and professional manner. Review the honor code at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/honorcpp.xhtml, and the social policies at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/socialcode.xhtml. Failure to uphold the honor code and/or the social policies while abroad will result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the program at your own expense.

IV. Financial Information
A. Program Cost, Billing and Payment
The cost of your program, as listed on the ICIC website, will be billed to your student account, less the deposit that you already paid with your application. You will be billed the same way (and should pay the same way) as if you were on campus for the same semester. Please note that students in some programs may pay certain fees directly to the program provider; this should be indicated on the ICIC website. Please ask your international programs advisor if you have any questions.

B. Cancellation Policies
A $500 deposit was due at the time of application. The $500 deposit is non-refundable after the beginning of pre-registration the semester preceding your study abroad*. If you cancel your semester abroad before the beginning of pre-registration, the deposit is typically refunded. However, the deposit will be used to cover any outstanding balance on your student account as applicable for the current term. **If you cancel after the pre-registration refund date, you will be held liable for any costs incurred on your behalf by Elon of the affiliate or host University, which may include up to the total program cost.** Elon strongly encourages each student to purchase cancellation insurance. Requests for a deposit refund must be submitted to the Isabella Cannon International Centre (ICIC) in writing. The cancellation/refund form is available at the reception desk of the ICIC. Approved refunds will be processed through the Bursar’s office.

*Note: September 25 is the cancellation deadline for spring semester programs at the Elon Centre abroad in Florence, Italy.

C. Trip Cancellation Insurance
There are many types of trip cancellation insurance and many different companies that offer coverage. We recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to aid you in the event of unforeseen circumstances. The ICIC will be sending your parents information regarding trip
cancellation insurance, but you are also welcome to investigate different companies on your own.

D. Budgeting
Since you will be abroad for a semester or more, we strongly recommend that you devise a budget. If you have never set a budget for yourself, now is the time to start. You may want to keep track of your expenses while you’re at Elon and use those as a guide for how much you may spend while abroad. However, you should keep in mind both the cost of living in your host country and the exchange rate (whether favorable or unfavorable). Visit www.xe.com or www.oanda.com/converter/classic to see current exchange rates worldwide. Factor in costs for extra travel and/or excursions during breaks or long weekends. If you need assistance with planning your budget, please visit the Financial Planning office, or speak with returned study abroad students.

E. Money
It is wise to take money in more than one form, such as ATM cards, credit cards, debit cards, traveler’s checks, etc. You may want to purchase in advance some of the local currency of your host country so you have it available as soon as you arrive. Be sure to inform your credit card companies and banks that you will need to activate your card for international use. You should tell them all the countries where you may travel and use your card so that your access is not suspended. Some financial institutions may require you to appear in person. Be aware that using your debit/credit card in an ATM abroad will often incur international service fees. You may also want to research different banks or credit card companies for the one that best suits your needs.

How to Handle Money Safely (adapted from http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html)

- Withdraw cash from ATMs and change your traveler’s check only as you need money.
- Do not carry much cash, and try to keep smaller bills available.
- Countersign traveler’s checks only in front of the person who will cash them.
- Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill.
- Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.
- Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money or buy tickets.
- If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of your plight. After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of:
  - Travelers’ checks to the nearest agent of the issuing company;
  - Credit cards to the issuing company;
  - Airline tickets to the airline or travel agent;
  - Passport to the nearest US Embassy or Consulate.

F. Financial Aid and Scholarships
Because you are participating in an Elon study abroad program, any financial aid and scholarships you may have should be applicable toward the program. However, be sure to confirm this with the Financial Planning office before you leave.

If you are interested in researching and applying for additional scholarships, be sure to visit the Funding for Study Abroad section of the ICIC website at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/international_studies/studyabroad/scholarships.xhtml.
There, you can find more information about financial aid, Isabella Cannon need-based and research-based scholarships, affiliate scholarships, national scholarships, and travel/study abroad grants. Please keep the following deadlines in mind for ICIC scholarship applications and travel/study abroad grants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Semester Abroad</td>
<td>May 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Semester Abroad</td>
<td>November 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. **Power of Attorney**
If you receive financial aid, need to file taxes, or have other documents that will need to be signed in your absence, you may wish to execute a power of attorney that will allow a parent or other trusted person to act on your behalf. For more information on power of attorney in North Carolina, please visit the North Carolina General Assembly website at [http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/statutes/StatutesTOC.pl?Chapter=0032A](http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/statutes/StatutesTOC.pl?Chapter=0032A).

V. **Travel Documentation**
A. **Passports**
If you do not have a passport, you need to apply IMMEDIATELY. If you currently have a passport, make sure it is valid for at least 6 months AFTER you plan to return from abroad. For example, if you plan to return in May, your passport must be valid until the end of November of that year. Furthermore, many semester programs require some type of visa, and you must have your passport in order to apply for that visa. It is YOUR responsibility to make sure you obtain your passport with sufficient time to get your visa or other travel documents. Information about securing a passport is available from the US Department of State website at [http://travel.state.gov/passport](http://travel.state.gov/passport). Passport applications and information are also available at the Town of Elon post office. You will need to turn in a copy of the picture page of your passport to the ICIC within a specified period of time.

B. **Visas**
Many programs require that you obtain a visa, which is simply a document inserted into your passport that allows you to enter the country. The process for obtaining a visa can be time-consuming and costly if you do not follow instructions exactly. Some countries also require that you appear in person at their embassy or consulate in the United States before your visa can be approved. Although your international programs advisor will advise you if/what kind of visa is necessary for your program, as well as the application process, it is ultimately YOUR responsibility to obtain your visa. You are responsible for all costs associated with the necessary visa.

C. **Clearing Immigration**
Along with your passport and visa, you may need other documents on hand when going through immigration upon arrival in your host country. These documents may include: flight itinerary or proof of return ticket; bank statements and/or other proof of access to funds; letter of acceptance from your host institution and/or home university; or other documents. Check with your international programs advisor or the US Department of State ([http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)) for more information.
VI. Pre-departure Information
   A. Checklist/Timeline

Please follow this step-by-step checklist as you prepare for your semester abroad. Be sure to also adhere to any other deadlines set by your International Programs Advisor.

Immediately Following General Orientation Session

☐ Make sure you have a passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the date you will return to the US. If your current passport expires prior to that date, you should apply for a new passport immediately.

☐ Obtain a visa if required.

☐ Review the CDC website (www.cdc.gov) for health requirements for your host country.

☐ Complete the course request process (affiliate and exchange programs).

☐ Complete the course planning form (Elon Centre programs).

☐ Research your host country and culture.

☐ Attend your program-specific orientation(s) and any other program meetings or events.

☐ Begin researching flights and planning your travel. Only purchase tickets once you have been accepted to the program and your program dates are confirmed.

Two to Three Weeks Prior to Departure

☐ Look for an e-mail from HTH Worldwide regarding your international health insurance.

☐ Register on the HTH website, enter your information in the Well Prepared section, and research the resources for your host city and country.

One Week Prior to Departure

☐ Begin packing.

☐ Reconfirm your flight to your destination.

☐ Contact campus mail to forward your mail to your home address while abroad.

☐ Make 2 copies of the following. Place one set in your carryon luggage, and leave a second set at home with your family:
   • Passport/visa
   • Credit card/debit card/traveler’s checks
   • International cards such as ISIC, etc.
   • Health insurance information/card (HTH and your personal insurance)
   • Any prescriptions from your physician
   • Acceptance letters

☐ Call your credit-card companies and/or banks (when using debit cards) and inform them of your travel dates and destinations.

☐ Make a list of all contact information in your host country for your family/friends.

☐ Establish an arrival plan with your family. Remember that upon arrival, access to e-mail and/or phone might not be immediately available.
Inform family/friends of important program dates.

**Day of Departure**

- Review this checklist.
- Review your arrival plan with your family.
- Place a change of clothes, your medications and prescriptions, and other valuables in your carry-on. Make sure no scissors, knives or other potential weapons forbidden by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and no liquids more than 3 oz., are in your carry-on.
- Make sure you have the address and contact information for where you are traveling easily accessible.
- Arrive at the airport at least 2 hours prior to your flight.

**Upon Arrival**

- Check in at housing/host institution.
- Contact your family as soon as possible and let them know you have arrived safely.

**During Your Semester Abroad**

- Watch for emails to your Elon email account from the ICIC regarding course registration for your upcoming semester at Elon.
- Watch for an e-mail from Residence Life.
- Maintain regular contact with family members.
- Carry your host institution’s address and emergency information with you at all times.

B. Packing

When it comes to packing for an extended stay abroad, a useful saying is, “pack your bag, take half out, and pack half of that.” It is essential that you pack as light as possible because you will be managing your luggage by yourself in unfamiliar airports, train stations, etc., when you are tired and jetlagged from your journey. Check with your airline for information regarding weight and size restrictions and additional fees.

In your carry-on, be sure to bring the following items: your passport and other necessary travel documents; copies of your passport and other travel documents; your medications and prescriptions; a change of clothes in case your checked luggage does not arrive with you; and copies of your credit cards and debit cards.

*Guidelines for Packing (adapted from http://studentsabroad.state.gov/html-site/SmartTravel.html)*

Before you start daydreaming about all that you’re going to pack, here are some things you should actually leave behind:
• Anything you would kick yourself for losing or that has sentimental value, such as expensive/meaningful jewelry, your Social Security card, etc.
• Copies of your travel documents. Leave with your family a copy of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver’s license, the credit cards you’re taking, serial numbers of your travelers’ checks, insurance information, as well as the addresses and phone numbers of the places you’ll be.
• Anything that could be considered a weapon. Even a pocketknife and/or pepper spray can result in a serious weapons charge while on foreign soil – even if it is found during a search or arrest for an unrelated offense.
• Toiletries and amenities – you can buy these on site.
• Handbags and fanny packs. (Yes, there are still people who wear fanny packs.) Wearing a big purse or a fanny pack is like wearing a neon sign that says, “Rob me!” Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a safe. When you have to carry them on you, inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. Another safe place to keep valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

Now that we’ve talked about what you shouldn’t bring abroad, here’s what you should bring:
• A “converter” or a “transformer” if your host country uses 220 volts and you have electrical appliances. Plug prongs can also be different abroad, so you may need a “plug adapter” as well. It may also be easier and/or less expensive to purchase electrical appliances once you are abroad. Visit http://ita.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/ecw/ or http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm for information on electrical current worldwide.
• Weather-appropriate clothes. Also, know the local dress code, especially for holy places. Whether it’s a mosque in Dubai, a cathedral in Vatican City, or a temple in Tel-Aviv, you should avoid bare shoulders, shorts and short skirts, and you may be required to cover your hair.
• A small first-aid kit, sunscreen and a mild pain reliever.
• Make sure your luggage is labeled inside and out with your name, address and telephone number. Use covered luggage tags to avoid becoming a target, and if possible, lock your luggage. Check the TSA website (http://www.tsa.gov) for guidelines regarding locked luggage and other current airline travel regulations.

C. Plan to Contact Your Family Upon Arrival
After you have booked your flight, you should devise a plan with your parents to communicate your safe arrival. Factor in time for delays, gathering luggage, going through immigration and clearing customs, making your way from the airport/train stations to your residence, finding access to a telephone or computer, and time zone differences.

D. Communication
There are many different ways to communicate while you are abroad, and the best form of communication depends on your interests and the country where you will be staying. It is important to stay in contact with your family and friends, but not to the point where it interferes with your experience. Talk with your family and friends now about how much you will be communicating so they know what to expect.

Cell Phones
Many countries allow you to purchase cell phones. Cell phones outside of the United States tend to work on a pre-paid system where you buy a certain amount of calling time. Generally, local calls are one
amount per minute and international calls are another amount per minute. Many times, incoming calls do not use your minutes. Nevertheless, be sure to investigate all associated fees when choosing a cell phone provider. Some students may also want to research whether their US cell phone can be activated for international use (at an additional cost).

### Calling Cards

It is often advised that you purchase calling cards in-country to use to call back to the US, as these may have better rates. If you purchase a calling card before you go, make sure you can use it abroad as many calling cards purchased in the US do not work while you are abroad.

### Voice over IP

VoIP software allows users to make telephone calls using a headset from computer to computer or a computer to a landline or cell phone. Calls made from a computer to a computer are free. Past study abroad students have recommended using Skype. For more information, please visit [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com).

### Blogs and Group Emails

Blogs are a great way to stay in touch with your family and friends all at once. However, please be cautious as the information you put on a blog may be accessible to more than your family and friends. You may also be interested in mini-blogs, such as Twitter, which allow you to post status updates in 140 characters or less. While we don’t recommend that you update your status constantly, this system will let others see what you are up to whenever you post. Group emails may also be a useful method of communication for you, allowing you to send one email to multiple people at once.

### Mailing and Packages

Receiving packages abroad can be complicated by customs regulations and mailing services, which vary from country to country. You might be required to go to a customs office, post office, or even the airport to collect a package and may be charged a duty. Many students find that receiving packages abroad is not worth the effort it might take to collect them.

Please make sure you talk with your friends and family about how frequently you will be talking with them while you are abroad. You want to make sure you balance your time abroad with your communication with your friends and family back home. Don’t miss out on opportunities that only exist while you are studying abroad!

### Flights and Luggage

You are responsible for booking your own flight and assuring that you arrive by the required program date. You must arrive by the first day of the program and leave on the last day. You may travel before the program begins or after it ends, as long as you are within the dates of your visa (if applicable), but remember that you will be fully responsible for your housing and expenses before and after the dates of your program. The ICIC strongly recommends that you DO NOT book your flight until you have been officially accepted by the program AND have received the official program dates. Your in-country program contacts may provide specific travel or airport information, so please be sure to follow their suggestions. Some students may also wish to consult a travel agent. The ICIC can recommend a travel agent if you like.

### Laptops

Returned study abroad students and your international programs advisor can suggest whether or not to take your laptop abroad. Some programs may strongly suggest that you bring a laptop, and others may say that it is optional as access to computer labs is available. If you do decide to bring a laptop, please ensure that it can operate on a different voltage. Most modern laptops are able to do this, but you will still need a plug adapter. Wireless internet access may not be as readily available, particularly in your residence, as it is here in the US. A laptop will also add weight to your luggage.
G. ISIC
The ISIC (International Student Identity Card) is an internationally accepted student ID card that also provides discounts for travel, hotels, shopping, restaurants, etc. in more than 100 countries. If you would like to obtain an ISIC card, you can pick up an application in the ICIC. The card costs $22.00, which you must pay in the Bursar’s office. You should bring the receipt, the completed application, and a passport-sized photo to the ICIC. We will make the card in our office and contact you when it is ready to be picked up. If you would like an ISIC but are not on campus, please visit http://www.isic.com to purchase one online.

H. Campus Mail
If you make arrangements with the campus mailroom, first-class mail sent to your Elon campus box will automatically be forwarded to the home address on record with the Registrar’s office. Bulk mail or campus mailings will not be forwarded. If you subscribe to any magazines please call the magazine and stop delivery or have your address changed.

I. Elon E-mail
Even if you are given an email address from your program, you will still have access to your Elon e-mail account and are expected to check it frequently for communication from campus offices.

J. Voting
If you are interested in participating in any US elections while you are abroad, information on voter registration and absentee ballots can be found through the following organizations:

- Overseas Vote Foundation: http://www.overseasvotefoundation.org

VII. Culture
(adapted from NAFSA Document Library – Sample Study Abroad Handbook)
http://www.nafsa.org/about.sec/migs/opo_sig_net/document_library_26/sample_ea/ea_handbook

A. What is Culture?
Author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. explains to us how important it is to learn about different cultures.

“One thing I would really like to tell them about is cultural relativity. I didn’t learn until I was in college about all the other cultures, and I should have learned that in the first grade. A first grader should understand that his or her culture isn’t a rational convention; that there are thousands of other cultures and they all work pretty well; that all cultures function on faith rather than truth; that there are lots of alternatives to our own society. Cultural relativity is defensible and attractive. It’s a source of hope.”

Culture is transmitted from generation to generation and our understanding of it helps us to define a particular group. But we must avoid making our understanding of a culture a stereotype. Not all Americans are alike. Similarly we can’t expect that all members of a given group will follow a list of traits we expect of their culture.

Further, there are no intrinsically right or wrong ways of living. For practical purposes, there are only different solutions that have been learned by a culture to provide for its basic needs. In order to understand the different values and behaviors of a culture, it is important to approach them non-judgmentally rather than automatically condemning or accepting various aspects.
Living in another country for an extended period of time will give you an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of another culture, confront different customs and ways of thinking, and adapt to a new daily routine. An individual’s adjustment to a new culture is a continuous, ongoing, natural process. It never stops, and the adjustment styles and techniques vary from one individual to another, from one culture to another. You may be seeing and asked to participate in activities that will challenge your beliefs, your values, and your sense of self.

Remember that as Americans we have our own culture. The people you encounter will be adapting to your culture as you are adapting to theirs. Sometimes the adapting process can make you uncomfortable. The more you know about your own personal values and how they are derived from your culture, the better prepared you will be to see, handle and understand the cultural differences you will encounter abroad.

B. Culture Shock
Culture shock is a typical reaction to time spent in a different culture. It can be frustrating to try to navigate day to day activity in an unfamiliar setting. It can be more difficult because you are far from your family, friends and support systems. At the same time living in another culture is extremely exciting and rewarding. As a result culture shock is normally described as a cycle of emotions, from exhilaration to disillusionment, from discouragement to fulfillment, from one extreme to another.

Most of you will encounter some culture shock. You often start in a honeymoon stage characterized by excitement, exhilaration and curiosity. After you settle into a routine some of the differences will make you feel out of place and frustrated. This can result in homesickness, and in some cases depression, lack of energy or concentration, irritability, hesitation to go out, and even physical illness. It is important to realize this is most often related to culture shock, and not “just you.” The most important tools to combat this will be patience, flexibility, adaptability and humor.

C. Some Tips to Responding to Culture Shock
- Get to know your host country and look for the logic that lies behind their style of living.
- Once you have identified some of your host country’s values, share some of your observations non-judgmentally with a native person whom you trust.
- Do not fear losing your home values or personal values. Enjoying and partaking in local customs will not make you less of an American. It will only open doors to understanding.
- Maintain a good sense of humor and be willing to laugh at yourself.
- Keep your mind occupied and be active. If you are feeling down in the dumps, do something to alleviate your depression such as taking a scenic trip to a nearby region or country.
- Find time to chronicle your experience through a blog, photos, journal, etc.
- Make an effort to learn the local language and then look for opportunities to use it. Don’t worry about making mistakes. You don’t worry when international students make grammar mistakes here. People will appreciate your effort to use their language.
- Remain open-minded and curious to find the differences.
- Do not impose your values or norms on others.
VIII. Health and Safety Information

A. Staying Healthy While Abroad
   (adapted from http://studentsabroad.state.gov/html-site/Health.html#HealthAbroad)

   **Eat, Drink and be Wary**

   Enjoying local delicacies is part of the adventure, but eating certain things could make you very sick. Many countries don’t have the same food handling and preparation standards found in the United States. Here are some suggestions:
   - Always use bottled water (even to brush your teeth) unless you are assured the tap water is safe. Beware of fake bottled water – tap water sold as bottled. Also, if tap water is not safe, neither is ice, and you should be wary of salads.
   - Stay away from raw foods, dirty restaurants and “street” food.
   - Wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitizer.
   - Don’t drink anything you did not open yourself or that you didn’t see being opened.
   - Always watch your drink at partiers and bars and get a new one if you leave it unattended for awhile.

   Get more health information from these expert sources:
   - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)
   - World Health Organization (www.who.int)

B. Safety Issues
   (adapted from NAFSA Document Library - Sample Study Abroad Handbook)

   At all times be aware, be careful, and use common sense. No matter how safe you feel and how trusting you are, you must always stay mentally alert so that you make wise decisions. Don’t go out alone. The most important safety tip is to always go out with at least one other person, and more is better. Be especially cautious at night. Realize that you are easily identified as an American and might be targeted for that reason.

   **Keep up with the news**
   Stay informed of any political unrest that may take place in your city or country.

   **Political unrest**
   There may be an increased risk of anti-American activity during periods of political conflict that involve the US and other nations. You can minimize risks and avoid obvious dangers by keeping a low profile, and not identifying yourself by dress, speech, or behavior. Avoid large groups of other Americans and stay away from demonstrations.

   **Stay alert**
   Be aware of your surroundings, including unknown individuals hanging around your building/residence. Be suspicious of unexpected packages, letters with no return addresses and/or letters that appear to contain more than just paper. Visitors should be screened and delivery persons should be asked for identification. Make sure to always lock your doors. Take the same precautions as you would in any large city. Do not give out your name or address and do not share program information with strangers. Know where the nearest police stations and hospitals are, and keep emergency numbers handy. Do not go into unsafe or unknown areas.
**Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment occurs abroad, just as it does in the US. Be aware that sexual harassment laws are not the same in every country. If you receive unwanted sexual attention, you should immediately distance yourself from the individual or situation, speak up in a clear and firm manner, and, most importantly, report the incident immediately to your program administrator or housing coordinator. Never walk alone at night. Be aware that some men from other countries may mistake friendliness for romantic interest. Dress appropriately. Do not accept drinks from strangers. Never invite people you do not know to your apartment.

**Sexual Violence and Relationship Violence**

Having a full and engaged experience while studying abroad is important and can be threatened by negative experiences. Sexual violence and relationship violence can destroy your semester/term abroad. Many of us don’t think about potential dangers and the contexts that aggravate certain crimes in other countries. While traveling abroad, you may find that stereotypes about American women and men are common in other parts of the world. The stereotypes, as you can imagine, are not always flattering. Rather, they tend to suggest that American women and men are very sexually active, heavy partiers (with respect to alcohol and other drugs) and interested in romantic relationships with individuals from other countries. This most likely comes from the prevalence of glamorized TV and movies. Because of this common stereotype, it is even more important to be educated and aware about the issue and context of sexual and relationship violence.

Things to think about while studying abroad:
- Talking about sex or sexual encounters may be interpreted as a “come on.”
- Dancing in clubs may also be interpreted as a “come on.”
- Though hitchhiking may be more common in other cultures, it carries the same dangers that it would in the United States.
- Kissing a friend “goodbye” or “hello” has different meanings in different cultures. Try to be clear about the context of your own cultural environment.
- Be firm and assertive when you say NO. Be clear and direct to be certain that your intention and the words are understood.
- Be aware that things which may appear as normal to you, such as getting drunk or asking someone to walk you home, may be misinterpreted based on other cultural norms.
- Know that even when you say NO, certain people will not respect your words. Sexual violence is not your fault in any context. Sometimes people are too afraid to say NO.

Violence against women is a growing concern all over the world. Sexual violence (including sexual assault against men) is prevalent in all cultures. Sometimes when students are out of their familiar environment, they are even more vulnerable to these crimes. Please remember that if someone commits one of these crimes against you, you are not responsible.

In an emergency, tell your faculty/staff advisor and ask them to call/email Leigh-Anne Royster at 336.278.7200/lroyster@elon.edu or in emergency and after hours 336.278.5555. Speaking with Ms. Royster is COMPLETELY confidential. She will not
encourage you to come home if that is not what you feel is best. She will not call your parents unless you want help speaking with them about the incident. She will not share information with any other University administrators unless you give permission first.

Avoid illegal drugs
Don’t think about it. Don’t do it. Regardless of the laws of your host country, use of any drug, including marijuana, by an Elon student may result in termination from the program at the student’s own expense. Elon University can assume no responsibility for you if you are arrested for drug use. Something that might be considered a misdemeanor in the US could be seen as a felony in another country. Do not put yourself or others at risk. Laws concerning drugs are much more stringent, and penalties, more severe, in Latin America, Asia and Europe than in the United States. Being a citizen of the United States does not matter. You are subject to the laws of the country you are in. The US Consulate cannot get you released if you are arrested. They can only help notify family and arrange a lawyer.

If you have a drug problem, or suspect that you might, you should not study abroad.

Alcohol
If you have a drinking problem, or suspect that you might, you should not study abroad. Drinking ages vary from country to country, but excessive drinking is inappropriate in all countries at all times. Excessive drinking can lead to serious consequences, including dismissal from the program. Moreover, all cultures consider drunkenness as socially unacceptable; most consider it foolish, even childish. If you do drink, do so in moderation.

C. Prescription Medications
If you are taking any prescription medications, ensure you have all the proper documentation for bringing your medication into your host country. Not all medications approved in the US are legal in other countries, and some countries have stricter regulations than others. If your medication is not legal in your host country, you may need to check with your doctor about switching to another medication in plenty of time. If your medication is legal, you must: 1) bring your medication in its original containers, which should be clearly labeled; 2) bring a copy of your prescription; 3) bring enough medication for the duration of your time abroad; 4) bring a note from your doctor explaining your medical condition, the medication and why you are carrying such a large supply; and 5) be sure to bring all of these things in your carry-on luggage so that you may present everything at customs. DO NOT PACK YOUR MEDICATION IN YOUR CHECKED BAGGAGE. It is important to have all of these documents on hand so your medication is not held up at customs. It can be very difficult and costly to get a new prescription in your host country. It also may be illegal to have any medication shipped to you.

If you have allergies, reactions to certain medications, foods, or insect bites, or other unique medical problems, consider wearing a “medical alert” bracelet. You may also wish to carry a letter from your physician explaining required treatment should you become ill.

Information on filling a prescription abroad and other health issues may be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1215.html.
D. **Immunizations/Vaccinations**

It is YOUR responsibility to check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website (www.cdc.gov) or check with a travel clinic to see what, if any, immunizations and/or medical tests are routine, recommended or required for your host country. It also YOUR responsibility to obtain any immunizations and/or medical tests before you travel abroad. Be aware that some immunizations require more than one dose spread over time, so do not wait until the last minute to check on your immunization needs.

E. **Mental Health**

(adapted from http://studentsabroad.state.gov/html-site/Health.html#HealthAbroad)

Traveling or studying abroad is not a cure for existing mental health conditions and will most likely make existing conditions worse by adding stress, unfamiliarity, culture shock and language barriers, and removing you from your normal support system. If you are struggling with a mental health condition, you should consider not studying abroad, and do not make a decision about studying abroad without first checking with your physician. You should describe your intended study abroad plans, including which countries you would visit, what you would be doing, and the duration of the program.

F. **Local Laws** (adapted from http://studentsabroad.state.gov/html-site/SmartTravel.html)

It seems obvious, but you MUST obey the local laws of the country you’re visiting. An arrest or accident during a study abroad can result in a difficult – and expensive – legal situation. It makes no difference if you did not know the law and your US citizenship does not protect you from full prosecution. Many countries impose harsh penalties for violations that would be considered minor in the US, and unlike the US, you may be considered guilty until proven innocent.

Feel free to take pictures, but only if you know it’s okay. In many countries, you can be detained for photographing security-related institutions, such as police and military installations, government buildings, airports, border areas and transportation facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs. You should also ask permission before taking photographs of local people. This shows respect and is polite.

Don’t accept packages from anyone, regardless of what may be offered or what story you are told. You could miss your flight, your exams, or several years of your life behind bars.

Avoid participating in demonstrations and other political activities. Even demonstrations that are intended to be peaceful can sometimes turn violent, and you don’t want to be arrested for involvement even if you just happen to be there.

If you find yourself in a legal jam, contact the closest US Embassy or Consulate for assistance. Keep in mind, US Consular employees cannot arrange for local officials to release detained American citizens. Better still, don’t get yourself in trouble and stay away from others engaged in questionable behavior.
G. Pedestrian, Hotel and Transportation Safety
(adapted from http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1179.html)

Safety on the Street

Be especially cautious in (or avoid) areas where you may be more easily victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, market places, festivals and crime-ridden neighborhoods.

- Don’t use shortcuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets.
- Don’t travel alone, especially at night.
- Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.
- Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments.
- Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.
- Avoid scam artists by being wary of strangers who approach you and offer to be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices.
- Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will:
  - jostle you,
  - ask you for directions or the time,
  - point to something spilled on your clothing,
  - distract you by creating a disturbance.
- Beware of groups of children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.
- Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.
- Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. Try to ask for directions only from individuals in authority or store employees.
- Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.
- Learn a few phrases in the local language or have them handy in written form so that you can signal your need for police or medical help.
- Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest US Embassy or Consulate.
- If you are confronted, don’t fight back – give up your valuables.

Safety in Your Hotel and/or Housing

- Keep your door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby.
- Do not leave money and other valuables exposed in your room while you are out. Use a safe if one is available.
- If you are out late at night, let someone know when you expect to return.
- Do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.
- Read the fire safety instructions in your room. Know how to report a fire, and be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located.

Safety on Public Transportation

If a country has a pattern of tourists being targeted by criminals on public transport, that information is mentioned in the Country Specific Information published by the US Department of State in the section about crime. Please visit http://travel.state.gov for more information.

- Taxis. Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings. Beware of unmarked cabs. If they have a meter, make sure they turn it on. If they do not have a meter, ask in advance how much the journey will cost.
• **Trains.** Well-organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourist routes is a problem. It is more common at night and especially overnight.
  o If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away. If necessary, be loud.
  o Do not accept food or drink from strangers. Where possible, lock your compartment. If it cannot be locked securely, take turns sleeping in shifts with your traveling companions. If that is not possible, stay awake. If you must sleep unprotected, tie down your luggage and secure your valuables.
  o Do not be afraid to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way.

• **Buses.** Be aware that the same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes.

IX. **Preparing for Your Return**

A. **Housing at Elon**

*Housing for students returning for FALL*

It is very important that you check your email, check the Residence Life website, and check with Residence Life staff while you are abroad. **HOUSING SELECTION IS IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH!**

- If you are planning to live on campus for the coming academic year, please assign someone (a responsible friend) to be a proxy and fill out the online application for you.
- Housing selection information will be sent out in January and February. The housing selection timeline, forms and information will be on the Residence Life website.
- You will need to pay for your housing reservation fee before you submit your housing selection application. The housing reservation can be paid by phone at x5300, by check or online.
- If you do not want to utilize a proxy or are unable to find a proxy, you may submit your application online yourself.

*Housing for students returns for WINTER TERM or SPRING*

It is very important that you check your email, check the Residence Life website, and check with Residence Life staff while you are abroad.

- Room assignments will be made on the basis of your class year and the availability of open space in late November and early December.
- Specific residence hall/apartment and roommate requested will be honored whenever possible. Roommate requests must be mutual.
- There is a separate housing application that will be available mid-November. Please check the Residence Life website or call to have one sent to you.
- The application is required to receive a housing assignment for winter term or spring.

*Students Who Live in University-Owned Apartments (Oaks A-F, Danieley A-F & O-P, The Crest)*

Students who have signed a year-long lease (11.5 month) agreement with the University are in a legally binding contract for the entire year. As stated in the lease agreement:

- The agreement may not be terminated prior to the end of the initial term for reason of studying abroad, whether optional or mandatory. For the lease to be cancelled for this reason, you the tenant, will have to find another tenant to fill the vacant spot or you will be obliged to pay the entire period of lease and board, if applicable, during your time abroad.
- If you do not find a student to take over your lease, you will be charged for your space while you are away, per your signed lease agreement.
- If you are thinking about signing a lease in the future, you are advised to consider your study abroad plans. If you have plans to go abroad within the next 12 months, it is not advisable that you sign a lease for a university-owned apartment.
A1. International Health Insurance

All semester study abroad students are enrolled in the Global Health and Safety Services and Insurance Program, administered by HTH Worldwide (http://www.hthstudents.com). This is a specialized insurance plan for study abroad students and ONLY covers students while they are outside the United States. The program is only valid for the duration of the study abroad program. If you plan to travel abroad prior to or following the program, you are encouraged to obtain insurance for those periods through HTH or a similar program. You are required to maintain your domestic insurance in the United States and should NOT terminate your existing coverage. Enrollment in the program is included in the study abroad program fee and the ICIC staff will enroll students with HTH.

Full details of the program are available on the ICIC website at: http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/international_studies/studyabroad/medical.xhtml

Enrollment and Registration Process

Prior to the start of the program abroad, the ICIC staff will register students for the plan with HTH. Within 24 hours of enrollment, you will receive a letter via email from HTH. A hard copy of the letter will also be mailed to your home address. You should cut out the card, place it in your wallet, and carry it with you throughout the duration of your semester abroad.

Once you have received the enrollment letter from HTH, you can then register online to create a profile and access HTH resources. You cannot register until you have received your enrollment letter with the certificate number (about 2-3 weeks before departure).

The HTH website provides extensive information on international health and safety, locating doctors abroad, prescriptions abroad, and medical translation guides. You should familiarize yourself with the site prior to departure.

Information on how to register can be found on the HTH Worldwide website.

Contact HTH Worldwide 24/7 at:

http://www.hthstudents.com

+1.610.254.8771(collect)

mailto:globalhealth@hthworldwide.com