

Advice for Parents: Frequently Asked Questions

*by William Hoffa
Academic Consultants International*

Why is study abroad so popular these days?

At the beginning of the 21st century, in a world becoming every year more interdependent, the ultimate educational value to students of pursuing at least some portion of their undergraduate years living and learning in another country is no longer really debatable. Not only is the global competence and alertness gained by such an experience crucial to American national and international interests, but students who leave college without having had a significant 'globalizing' experience as part of their undergraduate education, many educators now believe, will increasingly be thought of as not fully educated for the world they will enter. Your son or daughter understands this.

Indeed, the proverbially well-rounded education in preparation for living and working successfully in the 21st Century needs not only to be 'higher,' but also deeper, broader, and less nationalistic and monocultural than that which has served past generations. As stated by national report after national report, we now live in a global society in which knowledge, resources, and authority transcend national

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What are our roles as parents in helping select the right program? There seem to be hundreds to choose from!

Following are important considerations that must be factored into your daughter's or son's choice of a particular program. In order to be able to provide the requisite confirmation and support, which she or he might need, it is important for you to have a basic grasp of the following:

- How study abroad resembles and differs from domestic study
- How it is structured, and its many varieties in duration, location, and program type
- How credit is earned and used toward degree studies
- What the full costs will be
- What financial aid resources are available
- How safety can be maximized
- How the admissions process works

What are the primary causes of health and safety problems that students might face overseas?

Many of the health and safety problems that students find abroad are similar to those that they find on US college and university campuses. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that individual student behavior (sometimes misbehavior) is the cause of most illnesses, injuries, and fatalities. When students don't prepare themselves properly, ignore the advice and counsel of campus and overseas personnel, or act naively or as if they are invulnerable, they can get into a lot of trouble. This is especially true when they travel excessively on their own or engage in dangerous social behavior, such as binge drinking or hanging out in unsavory local nightspots. Your daughter or son is considerably less likely to be the victim of a natural catastrophe, of social violence, of disease, or of program negligence than of being victimized by her or his own poor judgment, exercised in unfamiliar surroundings.

However, there are health and safety problems that are not the direct responsibility of students themselves, but which can victimize them. These involve modes of travel (airplane, bus, van, taxi, car, etc.); criminal behavior directed against them (theft, sexual assault); and permanent or evolving health and safety conditions in the local environment (disease, natural catastrophes, political upheaval). In order to be prepared to meet the challenges specific to particular programs and locations, it is important that you and your daughter or son learn from information provided by the program sponsors, as well as, if possible, from the experiences of students who have participated in all programs being considered. Make sure to cover not just what's what during the 'program' of the program, but what can happen on excursions, as well as during independent travel. Obviously, there are many variations between countries, regions, and programs.

information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and transnational conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. For current information, advisories, or warnings, you can contact the State Department in Washington DC (tel: 202.647.4000), or get access to this same information via the World Wide Web, at