

**Mount St. Mary's
University**

Undergraduate Student Study Abroad Handbook

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A Letter to MSMU Undergraduate Students

Dear MSMU Undergraduate Students,

As you embark on the exciting journey of studying abroad, the Office of International Programs is thrilled to provide you with a Study Abroad Student Handbook. This invaluable resource is designed to equip you with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the challenges and opportunities that come with immersing yourself in a new cultural environment.

Within the pages of this handbook, you will find a wealth of crucial data, materials, and guidance encompassing the academic, practical, cultural, and safety aspects of studying overseas. Our goal is to empower you with the information and resources you need to make the most of your educational experience, adapt seamlessly to your new surroundings, and thrive in your host country.

The handbook serves as a thorough guide, offering clear and concise information to help you make informed decisions, engage deeply with your new environment, and promote both academic and personal growth. From understanding academic expectations and cultural nuances to navigating logistical concerns and ensuring your safety, this handbook covers it all.

Studying abroad is a transformative experience that broadens horizons, fosters personal growth, and cultivates a global perspective. With the Study Abroad Student Handbook as your companion, you will be equipped to embrace challenges, seize opportunities, and create lasting memories that will shape your future.

We encourage you to dive into this valuable resource and utilize it to its fullest potential. Together, we can embark on an extraordinary journey of discovery, learning, and personal enrichment.

Best wishes for a successful and rewarding study abroad experience!

Sincerely,

The Office of International Programs
Mount St. Mary's University
goabroad@msmary.edu

PURPOSE

The Study Abroad Student Handbook serves as a comprehensive and indispensable resource for MSMU students embarking on the transformative experience of studying overseas. Its primary purpose is to equip you with the essential knowledge, guidance, and tools necessary to navigate the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that come with immersing yourself in a foreign academic and cultural environment.

This handbook offers a thorough and well-rounded exploration of the academic, practical, cultural, and safety aspects of studying abroad. Through its pages, you will find crucial data, materials, and direction that will empower you to make the most of your educational journey, adapt seamlessly to your new surroundings, and thrive personally and academically in your host country.

By providing clear, concise, and accessible information, the handbook aims to be a valuable companion that enables you to make informed decisions, engage deeply with your new environment, and foster both academic and personal growth. Whether you seek guidance on academic expectations, cultural awareness, logistical considerations, or safety measures, this resource is designed to address your needs comprehensively.

The Study Abroad Student Handbook is a powerful tool that empowers you to embrace the challenges and seize the opportunities that come with studying overseas. It serves as a facilitator, enabling you to make wise choices, cultivate meaningful connections, and emerge from this experience with a profound sense of personal and intellectual enrichment.

Definitions and Terms

Full Semester MSMU-Sponsored Study Abroad Programs

Full semester MSMU-sponsored study abroad programs are long-term opportunities that allow you to immerse yourself in a foreign country for an entire academic term. These programs are facilitated through contractual partnerships between MSMU and third-party organizations. The Director of International Programs carefully schedules these programs and selects the faculty trip leaders.

During a full semester MSMU-sponsored study abroad program, you will be enrolled in courses taught by MSMU faculty members and can participate in various excursions and cultural activities organized by the third-party vendor. The vendor handles the logistical aspects, such as housing arrangements, classroom facilities, and day trips, ensuring a comprehensive and well-rounded experience.

One of the key advantages of these MSMU-sponsored programs is that you will remain registered as an MSMU student, allowing you to seamlessly continue receiving your financial aid and benefits, including veteran or Pell Grant assistance.

Customized MSMU-Sponsored Faculty-Led Programs

In addition to full semester programs, MSMU also offers customized faculty-led programs tailored to specific academic interests and destinations. These MSMU-sponsored programs are typically shorter in duration, ranging from one week to six weeks, and take place during summer, fall, winter, or spring breaks.

Customized MSMU-sponsored faculty-led programs are designed and coordinated by MSMU faculty members in collaboration with third-party partners, such as travel agencies, study abroad organizations, or international universities. These programs provide you with a unique opportunity to explore a particular region or theme under the guidance of an expert faculty member.

During these MSMU-sponsored programs, you will enroll in courses taught by the faculty trip leader, participate in cultural immersion activities, and gain valuable hands-on experience related to your academic interests.

Regardless of the MSMU-sponsored program type you choose, studying abroad offers a transformative experience that broadens your horizons, fosters personal growth, and cultivates a global perspective. The Office of International Programs is here to support you throughout the process, ensuring that you have access to the necessary resources and information to make the most of your study abroad experience.

Non-MSMU Sponsored Study Abroad Programs

In addition to the MSMU-sponsored study abroad opportunities, you can participate in programs offered by other universities or independent study abroad organizations. These non-MSMU sponsored programs provide additional flexibility and choices for your study abroad experience.

If you choose to study abroad through a non-MSMU sponsored program, you will need to apply directly to that program or university. It is important to note that MSMU scholarships and financial aid may not be applicable for these external programs. The availability of loans, grants, or private scholarships can vary depending on the specific program, university, and funding source requirements.

To pursue a non-MSMU sponsored study abroad program, you should follow these steps:

1. Apply to the desired program or university according to their application process and deadlines.
2. Meet with the chair or director of your academic program at MSMU to assess the ability to transfer course credits from the external program. Choose courses based on this advising session.
3. Work with the MSMU Registrar's Office to determine if the credit hours from the specific university or program you plan to attend can be transferred back to MSMU. This assessment is due to accreditation considerations. In this stage, you will need to fill out a Consortium Agreement, which can be found on MyMount.
4. If you complete this list and complete the credit hours in a satisfactory manner, you will need to submit your official transcripts to the Registrar's Office to facilitate the transfer of credit hours to MSMU.

It is crucial to understand that for non-MSMU sponsored programs, the university cannot provide advice regarding finances or federal aid. You will need to communicate directly with the organization or university you are applying to for information about costs, financial aid options, and any other program-specific requirements.

The consortium agreement process allows you to confirm that the courses you plan to take abroad will be eligible for transfer to MSMU. This assessment should be done in consultation with MSMU staff and faculty before committing to a non-sponsored program.

While non-MSMU sponsored programs offer additional choices, it is essential to carefully review the requirements, financial implications, and credit transfer process to ensure a seamless integration with your academic plan at MSMU.

Domestic Study Away Programs

In addition to international study abroad opportunities, MSMU offers domestic study away programs that allow you to explore different regions within the United States. These programs provide unique academic experiences while remaining within the country's borders.

MSMU's domestic study away programs come in two forms:

1. **Customized Faculty-Led Programs:** These are short-term programs, typically taking place during spring break or other academic breaks, led by MSMU faculty members. An example of such a program is the trip to South Carolina over spring break. These programs are designed to provide immersive learning experiences focused on specific academic or cultural themes.
2. **Special University Partnerships:** MSMU has established partnerships with other universities to offer specialized domestic study away programs. One such program is the Atlantic Coastal Experience, also known as the Coastal Semester, in collaboration with Hood College. These partnerships allow MSMU students to participate in unique academic and experiential learning opportunities hosted by partner institutions.

It is important to note that some of these domestic study away programs may have specific considerations or requirements. In such cases, the program will have its own dedicated handbook that outlines the details, policies, and procedures specific to that program.

If you are interested in participating in a domestic study away program, please consult the [Office of International Programs website](#).

Domestic study away programs offer exciting opportunities to explore different regions of the United States while engaging in enriching academic experiences. By participating in these programs, you can broaden your perspectives, gain invaluable hands-on learning, and develop a deeper appreciation for the cultural diversity within your own country.

Third-Party Partners

Many MSMU study abroad programs involve partnerships with third-party organizations or institutions. These partnerships are essential for facilitating various aspects of your study abroad experience, such as accommodations, excursions, and on-site support.

The main types of third-party partners involved in MSMU study abroad programs include:

1. **Study Abroad Organizations:** MSMU frequently collaborates with reputable study abroad organizations like AIFS, EF (Education First), Explorica, or CIEE. These organizations handle many of the logistical details, such as arranging excursions, securing classroom spaces, and providing on-the-ground support in your host country. If the program is organized by one of these organizations, you are likely to be asked to set up an account with them, fill out their application, and pay a deposit directly to them. You may also be asked to fill out a MSMU application and liability waiver. The rest of the cost will be billed to your standard tuition account, and you can make payments to MSMU.
2. **International Universities or Institutions:** Some MSMU study abroad programs are organized in partnership with universities or educational institutions in your host country. These local partners can provide facilities, instructors, and representatives to assist with planning and executing your program.
3. **Travel Agencies:** In certain cases, MSMU may work with travel agencies to arrange various aspects of your study abroad program, such as transportation, accommodation, and activities.

Regardless of the type of third-party partnership involved, these collaborations are designed to enhance your study abroad experience by providing access to resources, expertise, and support services that MSMU may not be able to offer independently.

It is important to note that the specific details and requirements of each study abroad program may vary depending on the third-party partners involved. If you have questions or concerns about the partnerships associated with your chosen program, feel free to contact the Office of International Programs for more information.

Travel Health Insurance

For your study abroad program, it is crucial to secure comprehensive travel health insurance to protect yourself and ensure a safe and worry-free experience. While some MSMU study abroad programs may include basic insurance coverage, it is essential for you, as a student participant, to review the provided insurance carefully and determine whether you need to supplement it with additional coverage.

Many MSMU study abroad programs include health insurance, but do not include travel insurance. Some programs require participants to purchase separate travel health insurance, typically 1-2 months before the program's departure date. A comprehensive travel health insurance policy should include the following coverage:

1. Trip cancellation for any reason, as well as coverage for trip delays.
2. Medical coverage and emergency medical evacuation. Check if your current medical plan can extend international coverage or add this to your travel insurance package.
3. Baggage and personal belongings coverage.
4. COVID-19 specific coverage.

It is important to note that most travel insurance policies require you to pay out-of-pocket initially and then submit a claim for reimbursement, as foreign entities may not recognize U.S. insurance plans directly.

The cost of travel health insurance can vary, but typically ranges around 6% of the total trip cost per person. MSMU encourages you to research and compare different options to find the best coverage that suits your needs and budget. Reputable sources like NerdWallet and Forbes recommend using search engines like SquareMouth to explore and compare various travel insurance plans.

Please note that MSMU is not responsible for the quality or coverage of the travel health insurance you purchase. It is your responsibility as a student participant to ensure that you have adequate insurance protection for your study abroad program.

If you have any questions or concerns about travel health insurance requirements or recommendations, please visit the [Office of International Programs website](#).

Step-by-Step Student Guide

Student Eligibility and Approval for Study Abroad

To participate in a study abroad program through Mount St. Mary's University, you must meet certain requirements and complete an approval process. This section outlines the eligibility criteria and steps you need to follow to ensure a successful application and approval for your study abroad experience.

Conduct and Academic Standing

- You must maintain a good disciplinary record, free from any serious violations of the campus life code of conduct, Title IX, or academic integrity policies.
- You must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher.

Application and Registration

- Complete and submit the study abroad application by the required due date, along with the necessary deposit.
- Register for the appropriate and required courses for your selected study abroad program.
- Prior to departure, you must submit a liability and risk waiver to the Office of International Programs at goabroad@msmary.edu.

Health and Vaccination Requirements

- Ensure that you have received all regular and required vaccinations.
- Students who have previously withdrawn or been withdrawn from a study abroad program may not be eligible for future opportunities.

Travel Documentation

- It is your responsibility to obtain a valid passport that meets the requirements of your destination country's government.
- If necessary, you must also secure the appropriate visa for travel to your study abroad destination.

Financial Standing

- You must be in good financial standing with the university to be approved for a study abroad program.

The Office of International Programs will review your application and ensure that you meet all eligibility criteria before granting final approval for participation in a study abroad program. If you have any questions or concerns about these requirements, please contact the Office of International Programs for guidance and assistance.

Remember, obtaining approval is a crucial step in the process of pursuing your study abroad goals. By carefully reviewing and fulfilling the necessary requirements, you can smoothly transition into an enriching and transformative international experience. This step-by-step guide will help you in this process. After confirming that you meet the eligibility requirements, please follow these steps to be approved for studying abroad.

Step 1



What to do first:

Top questions to ask yourself about where to study abroad.

- What fits your academic plan?
- What fits your extra circular schedule?
- What countries interest you?
- What programs can you afford?

Research the MSMU International Programs page and find a trip that interests you and fits your four-year college plan:

1. Work with your academic advisor to determine which study abroad programs align with your educational goals and degree requirements.
2. Explore the numerous opportunities available for studying abroad during your four years at MSMU.
3. Visit the program page and student resources page to review the list of available study abroad opportunities.
4. Identify programs of interest and assess their affordability. Look into scholarship options to determine if you are eligible for financial assistance.
5. Contact the program's trip leader for detailed cost information and to inquire about applying for relevant scholarships listed on the student resources page.
6. Estimate the costs of your desired program using the cost calculator provided on the website. For further questions, reach out to the trip leader whose contact information is listed on the website.
7. Once you have decided on a program, contact the trip leader to be added to the corresponding Canvas page for program-specific information and updates.

| Study Abroad Program Academic Terms, Length, and Calendar Dates | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>Type of Program</i> | <i>Length of Program</i> | <i>Approximate Calendar Dates of Program</i> |
| Fall Semester Programs | 10-12 weeks | End of August to mid-November |
| Fall Break Programs | 7-10 days | Over the fall break |
| Winter Term | 10-14 days | After Christmas and Before MLK Jr. Day |
| Spring Semester Programs | 10-12 weeks | End of January to mid-April |
| Spring Break Programs | 7-10 days | Over the spring break |
| Summer Session, I Programs | 10 to 28 days | May and/or June |
| Summer Session II Programs | 10 to 28 days | July and/or August |

Step 2 – Apply & Pay the Deposit

Application and Approval Process

All students interested in participating in a study abroad program must complete the appropriate application materials and submit them by the stated deadlines. Failure to apply on time may result in being denied for the program.

Application Requirements

1. MSMU Study Abroad Application Form on MyMount
2. MSMU Assumptions of Risk and Liability Waiver Form

3. Third Party Study Abroad Application Form, if requested
4. Pay the Deposit

For programs organized through a third-party provider, you may need to complete a second application specific to that organization in addition to MSMU's internal application. They may also request passport information or a personal passport photo for a student ID card.

Risk and Liability Forms

All participants must review and sign acknowledgment of the Assumptions of Risk and Liability Form. These forms confirm you understand and assume the inherent risks of international travel. Failure to complete these forms will prohibit you from receiving approval.

Final Approval

After submitting all application materials, paying the deposit, and completing the liability forms, you will be allowed to register for the study abroad courses while your application is being reviewed.

Non-Refundable Deposits

After being approved by the Office of International Programs, your deposit is no longer refundable. At this stage, should you choose to withdraw from the program, you will lose the deposit.

Optional Excursions or Upgrades

While your program itinerary will include major excursions, cultural activities, and accommodations, there may be opportunities to further customize your experience through optional extras. You will need to review and select these upgrades when you fill out your application. Common upgrades and add-ons include:

Single Room Accommodation Upgrade

Most programs provide double occupancy room accommodations with a roommate of the same self-identified sex/gender. However, you can often opt to upgrade to a single room for additional privacy at an increased cost.

Optional Tour Excursions

Depending on your destination, your study abroad partner organization or faculty trip leader may provide a list of optional day tours, museum visits, or other cultural excursions you can add onto your program for supplementary fees. These are not included in the original program pricing.

Availability and costs for these optional components will vary by program, so review your specific program details. Optional excursions tend to be more enjoyable when arranged in advance through your program provider.

To add any upgrades or optional extras, inquire with your faculty leader or program contact by the set deadline. Supplementary fees will be charged for any extras you choose to incorporate into your travel experience.

Step 3 – Course Offerings & Registration

As an MSMU student participating in a study abroad program, you will have the opportunity to enroll in courses specifically designed and taught by MSMU faculty during your time abroad. These course offerings aim to provide you with a unique academic experience that integrates your international location and cultural immersion.

For all programs, you will register on MyMount as per your normal semester registration. For fall semester and fall break programs, you register for courses during fall registration, which occurs in March or April each spring semester. For spring semester and spring break programs, you register for courses during the spring registration, which occurs in October or November each fall semester. Similarly, if you want to participate in a winter term or summer term study abroad program, you register for courses during their standard registrations too.

Full Semester Programs and Courses

For full-semester study abroad programs, MSMU faculty trip leaders will teach two courses, and you will be required to enroll in a "Life and Culture" course. The Life and Culture course is designed to enhance your cultural understanding and immersion through assignments, excursions, and activities related to your host country.

Each course, including the Life and Culture course, will have a dedicated Canvas page where you can access course materials, submit assignments, and engage with your classmates and instructors.

In addition to the courses taught by MSMU faculty, you may enroll in asynchronous online courses offered by MSMU during your semester abroad. These online courses will follow the standard 15-week MSMU semester schedule.

Customized Faculty-Led Programs and Courses

For shorter, customized faculty-led programs, the course offerings and credit hours may vary. These programs can range from one week with one credit hour to four weeks with up to nine credit hours. The courses offered during these programs will be specifically tailored to integrate the study abroad location and cultural experiences into the course content and assignments.

Course Selection and Advising

Before your study abroad program, you will meet with your academic advisor and the faculty trip leader to select courses that align with your academic plan and degree requirements.

During your time abroad, the faculty trip leader will serve as your primary academic advisor, providing guidance and support throughout your international experience.

It is important to note that the Office of International Programs has provided detailed information about course offerings, registration procedures, and any destination-specific requirements for your particular study abroad program both in the online catalog and on your country specific Canvas page.

By taking advantage of these unique course offerings and working closely with your advisors, you can ensure that your study abroad experience not only broadens your cultural horizons but also contributes meaningfully to your academic progress and personal growth.

Step 4 – Student Responsibilities for Safe Travel

As an MSMU student participating in a study abroad program, it is essential that you take an active role in preparing for a safe and secure international experience. While your faculty trip leader and the Office of International Programs will provide guidance and support, you have important responsibilities to ensure your well-being and readiness for any potential challenges.

Travel Documentation and Requirements

1. Ensure that you have a valid passport that meets the entry requirements of your destination country. It is your responsibility to research and obtain any necessary visas or travel documents.
2. Familiarize yourself with the travel advisories and entry/exit requirements for your destination country by visiting the U.S. Department of State website (travel.state.gov).
3. Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) for your destination country through the travel.state.gov website. This will allow the U.S. government to better assist you in case of an emergency.

Health and Safety Preparedness

1. Research the health and vaccine requirements for your destination country by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC (Center for Disease Control)) website (wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list).
2. Ensure you have adequate health insurance coverage for your study abroad program. Some programs may require specific insurance policies, so be sure to follow the guidelines provided.
3. Disclose any medical conditions or special needs to your faculty trip leader and the Office of International Programs to ensure appropriate accommodation can be provided.
4. Familiarize yourself with the local emergency services, healthcare facilities, and counseling resources available in your host country.

Communication and Emergency Preparedness

1. Download and install communication apps recommended by your faculty trip leader (e.g., WhatsApp) to ensure easy communication with the group and in case of emergencies.
2. Provide your emergency contact information to the Office of International Programs and ensure your designated emergency contact is aware of your travel plans.
3. Familiarize yourself with local emergency numbers, laws, and cultural norms of your host country to help you respond appropriately in case of an incident.

Independent Travel

If you plan to travel independently during your study abroad program, it is your responsibility to notify your faculty trip leader and any third-party program partners in advance. Seek guidance from your faculty leader on appropriate destinations and travel precautions.

By taking an active role in preparing for your study abroad experience and following the guidance provided by MSMU, you can help ensure a safe, enjoyable, and enriching international education. Remember, your safety and well-being are of utmost importance, and it is crucial that you take the necessary steps to be informed and prepared.

Special Needs and Accommodations

We understand that some students may have mental health concerns, physical disabilities, food allergies, or other special needs that require additional planning and accommodation. It is important to disclose any relevant conditions or restrictions during the application process so that we can work with you to ensure your needs are met to the best of our abilities.

Mental Health Support

If you currently receive counseling or therapy, discuss your travel plans with your mental health professional. They may recommend options for continuing your care remotely through video sessions or provide referrals for in-country resources at your destination. Our staff can also assist in identifying counseling services or support groups available locally.

Dietary Restrictions

Depending on your destination, it may be challenging to accommodate certain dietary restrictions, especially in developing countries. Research cuisine options ahead of time and speak with program staff about meal provisions. You may need to provide your own supplemental foods or supplies to ensure your needs are met.

Physical Accessibility

Let us know if you have any physical disabilities or mobility concerns. We will advise on the accessibility of accommodations, transportation, and program activities at your destination. Some locations may have limited accessibility, so we will collaborate on reasonable accommodations.

Medication and Medical Conditions

If you take prescription medications or have chronic medical conditions, prepare a plan with your doctor for managing your health while traveling. Research the availability of your medications at your destination and make sure to pack an adequate supply, along with a copy of your prescriptions.

Academic Accommodations

Students who receive academic accommodations or learning support services on their home campus should discuss their needs with the faculty trip leader(s) as early as possible. Some examples include extended time for tests/assignments, note-taking assistance, alternative textbook formats, etc.

While we strive to provide reasonable accommodations, it may be more difficult to secure certain services once abroad, especially in remote locations with limited resources. By discussing your learning needs well in advance of departure, the faculty can better plan and prepare to assist you during the program.

Depending on the destination, length of the program, and specific accommodations required, alternative arrangements may need to be made. This could involve securing an in-country service provider, arranging for remote access to home campus resources, or modifying program requirements if appropriate alternatives cannot be established abroad.

Open and proactive communication about your learning needs is essential to ensuring we can support you throughout your travel experience. We recommend initiating this conversation at least 2-3 months prior to departure to allow sufficient time for coordination and planning. The sooner faculty leaders are aware, the more seamlessly we can facilitate your accommodations.

Remember, being proactive about your specific needs will allow us to provide the best possible support throughout your travel experience. Do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns!

Step 5 – Group Travel and Flight Arrangements

Depending on your specific program, there may or may not be an option for group flights organized by the third-party partner or the faculty trip leader. Program group travel options vary as described below.

Group Flight Included

Some programs include a group flight reservation for all participants to travel together. These flights are pre-arranged by the program and included in your overall program fees.

Optional Group Flight

Certain programs provide an optional group flight that students can choose to book at an additional cost. While not required, this can be a convenient way to travel with other

participants. These optional group flights often require a minimum number of participants in order to be organized by the third-party partner.

No Group Flight Option

In cases where no group flight is offered, you are responsible for booking your own travel arrangements to/from the destination. However, you may coordinate with other students or your faculty trip leader.

Familiarize Yourself with Travel Logistics

Regardless of how you book your flights, take time to review the airports, terminals, and any layover locations for your itinerary. Note the meet-up points, arrival procedures, and any extra transportation required.

Coordinating Independent Travel

If a group flight is not available or you cannot take advantage of it, work with your faculty leader to coordinate independent travel arrangements. They can assist in ensuring participants arrive at the designated location by certain dates/times. You may also connect with other students to organize group travel independently.

The ability to travel together can provide a smoother travel experience. Opt for any group flight offerings when possible or collaborate with fellow participants if booking separately. Your faculty leader will provide guidance about arrival meetings and transfers involved with the program itinerary.

Step 6 – Packing Essentials for your Trip

Communication Essentials

Consider your cell phone options:

- Purchase a local SIM card upon arrival or explore international phone plans.
- Assess Wi-Fi availability in your accommodation and educational institution.
- Verify if your current cell phone is compatible with international networks.

Power and Connectivity

Ensure seamless electronic usage:

- Confirm if your electronic devices are dual voltage or utilize a voltage converter.
- Pack a power strip for multiple devices if outlets are limited.
- Carry a backup charger for essential devices.
- Research the power outlet standards in your destination country.
- Purchase appropriate outlet adapters for your electronic devices.
- Familiarize yourself with global outlet types and voltages:
 - North America: Type A and Type B, Voltage: 120V

- Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia: Type C, Type E, Type F, Type G, and Type I, Voltage: 230V
- United Kingdom: Type G, Voltage: 230V
- South America: Type A, Type C, and Type I, Voltage: Varies (often 220V)

Packing Essentials for Any Duration

Essential documents:

- Passport, visa, student ID, travel insurance, itinerary, emergency contact information, etc.
- Travel-sized first aid kit.

Clothing:

- Weather-appropriate attire, including layers if necessary.
- Mix of casual and formal clothing.
- Outdoor activity gear like hiking boots and a rain jacket.
- Undergarments.

Toiletries and personal care items:

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant (remember, you can purchase forgotten items at your destination).
- Body wash, shampoo, conditioner, skincare, and hair products.
- Razor and shaving cream.

Electronics:

- Laptop, charger, power bank.
- Adapter for electrical outlets based on your destination's requirements.

Medications

Money:

- Local currency, debit/credit cards (inform your bank about your travel plans).
- Consult your trip leader for currency advice.

Academic supplies:

- Notebook, pencils, laptop, student ID.

Miscellaneous:

- Sunglasses, sunscreen, umbrella, backpack, camera.

For additional pre-departure tips, you can visit the following links:

- [Pre-departure tips](#)
- [Using your phone while traveling](#)
- [Understanding travel adapters and plug-ins](#)

Step 7 – Required Pre-Departure Meetings

Approximately 2-4 weeks before your scheduled program departure date, there will be a required online pre-departure meeting led by your faculty trip leader(s) and/or study abroad partner organization.

This meeting is mandatory for all participating students to attend. The specific date, time, and virtual meeting link will be provided to you well in advance.

The pre-departure meeting covers crucial information to ensure you are fully prepared for your upcoming travel experience, including:

- Final review of program itinerary and logistics, including airport and ground travel
- Health, safety, and emergency protocols
- Local cultural guidance and etiquette
- Packing and travel document checklist
- Q&A with program leaders and staff

Failure to attend this pre-departure meeting may result in missing key details and instructions for your program. Come prepared with any final questions or concerns you may have.

This meeting allows program leaders to convey last-minute updates and ensure everyone is on the same page before embarking on the study abroad experience together. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to join this virtual meeting from a distraction-free setting.

Treat this as a critical final step in your departure preparations. Active participation in the pre-departure meeting is required for all students.

Step 8 – Away We Go!

With all your pre-departure preparation complete, it is finally time for the adventure to begin!

Use this checklist to ensure you are ready for a smooth start to your study abroad experience:

Prior to Departure

- Make copies of important documents to take with you (passport, visa, etc.)
- Confirm travel arrangements and arrival logistics
- Complete any outstanding payments or paperwork
- Prepare culturally appropriate attire and supplies
- Notify bank and cell provider of international travel

Departure Day

- Pack essentials in your carry-on (ID, travel documents, medications, etc.)
- Clearly label all luggage with name, destination, and contact info

- Allow plenty of time at the airport for check-in and security
- Have a plan for ground transportation upon arrival
- Bring snacks and entertainment for potential delays

First Few Days

- Let family/friends know you have arrived safely
- Locate the nearest embassy/consulate
- Get local currency from secure ATMs/banks
- Familiarize yourself with the area and transportation options
- Attend the in-country orientation session(s)

Most importantly, be open-minded, respectful, and ready to fully immerse yourself! This incredible experience abroad will create lasting memories and invaluable personal growth.

If issues arise, communicate promptly with your faculty leaders. Otherwise, prepare to explore, learn, and embark on the adventure of a lifetime! Have an amazing study abroad experience!

Additional Helpful Information for Students

Scholarships, Loans, and Grants

Study abroad offers an enriching educational experience, but travel costs can be a consideration. Mount St. Mary's University provides several options to help finance your international program.

Meet with a Financial Aid Counselor early to understand all available options and application requirements for using financial aid for study abroad. They can also provide guidance on additional loans, payment plans, or financing options you may be eligible for.

With proper planning, studying abroad can be an affordable and worthwhile investment in your global education! Take advantage of available resources and funding opportunities.

Using Financial Aid for MSMU Programs

If you are participating in an MSMU-sponsored study abroad program, you may be able to apply your existing financial aid package, including:

- Institutional scholarships and grants
- Federal loans (Stafford, PLUS, etc.)
- Federal/State grants (Pell, SEOG, Cal Grants)

For semester-long programs, costs are often comparable to studying residentially on campus. However, some semester abroad options have higher overall fees up to \$4,000 more. Costs from previous full semester study abroad programs are available on the International Programs website.

Summer/Winter Term Funding

Many students deplete annual aid during fall and spring terms. To access additional funding for summer and winter travel programs, you may need to:

- File a new FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) for the corresponding aid year
- Apply for a Federal Pell Grant
- Seek private or national scholarship opportunities
- Utilize VA (Veterans Affairs) education benefits (if applicable)

Study Abroad Scholarships

The Office of International Education maintains a list of study abroad scholarships offered by external organizations. Some examples include:

- Gilman International Scholarship
- Fund for Education Abroad Scholarships
- AIFS program scholarships

Veterans and Pell Grant Recipients

If you are a veteran or a recipient of the Pell Grant, you can utilize your benefits to finance your study abroad experience. The key to ensuring seamless continuation of your benefits lies in maintaining your status as a registered U.S. student while studying overseas.

One of the most convenient ways to achieve this is by enrolling in an MSMU-sponsored study abroad program. By doing so, you will register for courses as you normally would, and you will be billed through your MSMU financial account. This streamlined process ensures that your veteran or Pell Grant benefits remain uninterrupted, allowing you to focus on immersing yourself in a new academic and cultural environment.

We encourage you to explore the MSMU-sponsored study abroad programs and consult with our office to understand the eligibility requirements and application process. Our dedicated staff is here to support you every step of the way, ensuring that your study abroad experience is not only rewarding but also financially accessible.

Adult Learners and Graduate Students

While Mount St. Mary's University does not offer study abroad programs specifically designed for adult/graduate students, there are still opportunities to gain invaluable global experiences.

Customized Faculty-Led Programs

Select faculty-led study abroad programs organized through MSMU can accommodate adult and graduate student participation, particularly those that are travel/excursion-based with no formal classroom hours. These short-term, customized programs bring students face-to-face with course topics in an international context.

Non-MSMU Provider Programs

Another option is to explore study abroad programs offered through external organizations and educational providers not affiliated with MSMU. These independent programs are open

to students from any university. Many offer graduate-level courses, research opportunities, internships and more in destinations worldwide.

While MSMU aid may be limited for non-sponsored programs, students can still apply for external scholarships, grants, and loans to fund their experience. Some employers also provide tuition assistance benefits that could apply.

Increased Flexibility

For adult/graduate students who are working professionals, these shorter-term faculty-led or third-party provider programs allow more flexibility than a full semester away. The time commitment of 1-4 weeks may be more conducive to balancing existing work/life obligations.

Next Steps

Start by meeting with your academic advisor to discuss your interests and whether any MSMU customized programs may be a good fit. For non-MSMU options, the study abroad student resources website can point you toward reputable independent provider programs and resources.

International experience is invaluable for all students. As a graduate or adult learner, get creative about taking advantage of MSMU's partnerships or external opportunities to globalize your education!

Program Withdraw, Refunds & Insurance

We understand that unexpected circumstances may arise where you need to withdraw from a study abroad program prior to departure. It is important to familiarize yourself with the withdrawal policies and refund procedures.

Program Withdraw

To withdraw, you must immediately notify the Office of International Programs in writing. The date of withdrawal will be determined by the date on your written notification.

Refund Schedule

Program fees and deposits follow a strict refund schedule based on your withdrawal date and the program you have applied for.

- You are eligible to receive a 100% refund before approval of program participation from the Director of International Programs. Once the Director has approved you to study abroad, which is usually one week after the application is due, your deposit becomes non-refundable.
- See Canvas page and program documents for additional information on the last date for a partial refund.

Withdrawing closer to departure dates results in greater financial penalties. All refunds are subject to non-refundable application and third-party fees.

Requesting Reimbursement

If you withdraw after making any individual payments for airfare, accommodations etc., you must seek reimbursement from those vendors directly per their refund policies. MSMU cannot guarantee refunds.

Travel Insurance

To protect your travel investment, MSMU highly recommends purchasing a comprehensive travel insurance plan that covers:

- Medical/health issues
- Travel delays/interruptions
- Lost/delayed baggage
- Emergency evacuation

This allows you to recoup more substantial pre-paid costs if you must withdraw for the reasons covered. Insurance must be purchased by set deadlines.

Please review the full withdrawal and refund policy carefully. If extenuating circumstances require withdrawal, communicate promptly to minimize financial impacts. Travel insurance provides valuable protection, but exclusions apply.

Removal from Study Abroad Programs

Mount St. Mary's University has a zero-tolerance policy regarding drug use, violence, or other egregious misconduct during study abroad programs. Participants engaged in these prohibited behaviors will be immediately removed from the program with no refund of fees and no guarantee of the ability to complete their coursework.

Zero Tolerance for Drug Use or Violence

The unlawful possession, use, purchase or distribution of drugs or controlled substances is strictly prohibited. Any drug-related incidents will result in immediate dismissal. Likewise, acts of violence including assault, threats, harassment, or other endangering behavior toward others will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Misconduct and Policy Violations

Other misconduct that fundamentally disrupts the program or violates MSMU's student code of conduct, such as:

- Excessive alcohol abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Blatant disregard for cultural norms/laws
- Repeated absences or failure to attend program activities
- Destruction of property
- Threats to the safety of other persons

May also be grounds for removal and early departure.

No Refunds and Potential Inability to Complete Coursework

If removed from a study abroad program for drug use, violence, or other policy violations, participants will not receive any refund of program fees, deposits, or other costs. They are also responsible for any additional expenses incurred due to changes in travel plans or early

return. Likewise, if the student is responsible for damages, they will be charged for those damages.

Additionally, for excursion-based programs, removal will result in the student being withdrawn from the travel course itself with no option to complete the academic requirements.

By participating in an MSMU study abroad program, you commit to adhering to all university policies, cultural norms, and local laws. These standards of conduct are vital for a safe, constructive learning environment for all participants. Violations put yourself and others at risk of significant academic and financial consequences.