

**Office of Global Engagement  
Study Abroad Handbook**



A Resource for Participants in  
Rivier University's Study Abroad Program

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Dear global friend:

Congratulations on your international travel plans! I am thrilled that you are stepping out into an exciting global experience with Rivier University. I'm confident that your international experience will contribute profoundly to your development as a person, a scholar, and a global citizen.

The Office of Global Engagement team has compiled this handbook to provide you with information you need to prepare for your experience abroad and make the most of each moment. While you will also receive information directly from your host institution or organization, please review this handbook and share the information with others who are supporting your trip.

Regardless if this is your first time leaving the US, or if you have a passport full of beautiful visas, I hope and pray that this global experience will challenge and stimulate you. You can expect to have a better understanding of yourself, a different perspective on world affairs, new friends, and an eagerness to explore newly discovered interests. We wish you the best for a productive and memorable experience. May this experience lead you to many more!

If you have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact the Office of Global Engagement at 603-897-8782 or email at [globalengagement@rivier.edu](mailto:globalengagement@rivier.edu)

Have a wonderful time abroad!

Sincerely,

Dey Barriga  
Director, International Student Services

## Introduction to Study Abroad at Rivier University

The Office of Global Engagement facilitates Rivier students completing academic courses at institutions located outside of the United States. Study abroad options are based on written agreements with Fairfield University (Ireland, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Italy, France, and Australia, Brazil), Hellenic American University (Greece), and Atılım University (Turkey). Fairfield University's study abroad opportunities are available at <http://www.fairfield.edu/sa/index.html>.

Occasionally, we'll get a request from a student to study in a country or with a program provider that is new to Rivier University. We are happy to investigate these for possible affiliation with the University. However, to ensure our student's safety and the academic integrity of our programs, it should be noted that these investigations can take months of time. We strongly encourage you to work with the OGE and sign up with one of our study abroad partners.

### **First Steps to Plan Your Study Abroad Adventure:**

If you are thinking of participating in any of the study abroad programs offered at Rivier University and its partners, you should begin your planning early.

#### **1. Check your eligibility**

Eligible students must be in good academic and disciplinary standing in order to participate in any study abroad programs. You need at least a GPA of 2.8 to study abroad. One more reason to do well in your studies; GPA requirements are firm and there are no exceptions. Meet with the Financial Aid Counselor to check if you are eligible for Financial Aid for study abroad programs.

#### **2. Start the process**

Our programs are diverse and distinct, and it takes a little work to determine which one is the best fit for you and your global goals. Here are a couple of points to help you think about which program might be best:

- Research the different locations. The OGE has a resource center that includes guide books, information on how to travel cheaply, making the most of your study abroad experience, and much more. Videos are readily available on YouTube as well.
- Meet with an OGE team member. Every member of the OGE team can help you think about the different study abroad locations, show you online videos, course selections, and syllabi from the host institutions.
- Attend a general study abroad information session. The OGE presents the Rivier University study abroad program several times each semester. Check with the team to find out when the next information session is.
- Talk to your academic advisor or faculty advisor. Your advisors can help you think about how different programs will help you graduate. Every academic program

can include a study abroad experience, though some take more planning than others. Nursing is the most difficult, as the academic program is very specific. But remember, you can also do summer courses at all of our study abroad sites.

- Apply for a Passport. All students going abroad will need a valid passport for at least 6 months with two open pages. If you do not have a current passport, you should apply for one as soon as possible. Please note that there are certain countries that will not issue a visa or allow you to enter the country if your passport is set to expire within 120 days or when you expect to return from abroad. Visit <http://travel.state.gov/passport> for more information.

***Once you have been approved of your plan to study abroad, apply with Office of Global Engagement and complete the application requirements.***

- Application for Approval to Study Abroad
- \$50 non-refundable application fee
- Essay explaining why you would like to participate in study abroad program of your choice

After a couple of weeks, you will be receiving an invitation for a mandatory pre-departure orientation session. You must attend and submit the following documents at that time:

- Travel Abroad Acknowledgement and Release Form
- Medical Emergency Contact Form
- Mandatory Emergency Contact Information (abroad)
- Certificate of Insurance

## Preparing to Go

**Pre-departure checklist: These are all the things you will want to have checked off before you leave. If you have questions, see explanations below.**

- Valid passport and appropriate visa/entry documents
- Made all travel arrangements
- Arranged all medical appointments
- Checked health insurance coverage
- Obtained necessary vaccinations and prescriptions
- Put together packing list
- Researched host country
- Planned budget
- Prepared communication plan
- Completed all Rivier University's Pre-Departure paperwork
- Notified Residence Life and Housing, Sodexo and Mailroom
- Read all reminders after arrival abroad on safety, healthy, emergency procedures, etc.

### **Passport and Visa:**

- Your passport is your most important legal document while traveling overseas. You must have a valid passport to show border and customs authorities when you enter or leave the U.S., when you cross other national borders, and on all occasions that require official verification of your citizenship (including exchanging money and checking into a hostel). Information about obtaining a U.S. passport (including the application) can be found at [www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)
- **Visa:** A visa is a stamp that grants an official permission to enter that country for a specific date that defines the length of stay and the purpose such as study, tourism, or work. Apply for a visa if necessary. Please visit <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco/> and view the list of international consulates and embassies in the United States.  
If you are a U.S. passport holder, you can find visa requirements for a specific country in the Entry/Exit Requirements section in the Country Specific Information on the State Department's website at [www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_4965.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html)
- **Students in F1 Visa Status:** meet with your International Student Advisor for information. Federal regulations require that you do not leave the country without getting clearance from the International Students Office in the Office of Global Engagement located in Memorial Hall, first floor, Room 123.

**Important Reminder:** It is advisable to scan your passport and visas, then bring one copy with you or email yourself the same copy. You could share your documents with a close friend or family member.

**Travel Arrangements:**

As soon as your study abroad application is approved, plan to book your travel arrangements immediately. For accommodation, keep in mind that hostels are less expensive than hotels. It is advisable to purchase rail and airline passes in the U.S. before departure. For a great review of places to stay, check out <http://www.tripadvisor.com>. If you are interested in staying at a Hostel, check out <http://www.hostels.com>.

Fees may apply if you change your travel dates so plan accordingly. Be aware of all the guidelines and restrictions before purchasing airline tickets and passes.

Here are a few additional recommended travel websites:

[www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com)

[www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)

[www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)

[www.priceline.com](http://www.priceline.com)

[www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com)

[www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com)

**Medical Insurance:**

All students participating in study abroad or teaching trips must carry health insurance that is valid overseas for hospitalization and physician care. Most U.S. plans provide coverage for medical services received outside the U.S., but U.S. health insurance is typically not accepted outside the U.S. In many places around the world, payment in cash or by credit card is required at the time care is provided. Even though most students are able to seek reimbursement from their insurance carrier when they return to the U.S., they still need to pay for services out of pocket while they are abroad. Keep your health insurance card with your plan information and ID number with you at all times. Understanding your insurance coverage is very helpful in case you need to use it. You should know how bills are paid in the case of a medical emergency and for routine treatments. Carry a few blank claim forms with you to reimburse any medical expenses incurred while you are abroad; request for a receipt and save all your bills.

**Health Preparations:**

Studying abroad is exciting, but also stressful. If you have physical or emotional problems, please address them before leaving the U.S. Seek advice about your options and discuss your overseas medical care. A healthy body and mind are essential for a successful study abroad. Take care of yourself first. An appointment with your medical and/or dental provider should be arranged before you depart. For your safety and well-being, it is also vital that you inform us of any physical, emotional, psychological difficulties, or special needs that you have.

NOTE: If you do not have medical insurance yet, please check MEDEX at <http://www.medexassist.com/>. This website provides very helpful information on comprehensive insurance and travel emergency assistance for students, faculty, and staff who

are traveling internationally. The website also provides up-to-date information about travel risks of all kinds.

**Immunizations:**

It is important to meet with your medical provider before departure; she/he will be able to tell you which vaccinations are necessary. Make sure to check certain countries that may also recommend vaccinations against specific diseases before departure. Visit the following website for details:

<http://www.state.gov/> U.S. Department of State

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

**Pack a Medical Kit:**

- Bring all your prescriptions in their original bottles, pain relievers, anti-diarrhea, etc.
- First aid kit: Band-Aids, antibacterial ointments and sunscreen.
- Glasses, contacts, contacts solution.
- Contraceptives, feminine hygiene products and other routine health and medical products that you may need.

**Money While Traveling:**

Diversify your finances by using an ATM card, travelers' checks, and credit cards. You may want to exchange about \$150.00 prior to departure to have cash on hand when you arrive at your destination. Carrying large amounts of cash is not recommended. American currency can be exchanged for foreign currency at most international airports and major banks. It is advisable to exchange money at banks and not at hotels or retail shops, where the exchange rates are unfavorable.

\*ATM pin must be only 4 numbers long and cannot begin with a zero.

Current currency exchange rates can be found at [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic) or [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) Check the currency converter apps for your Blackberry, Android, iPhone, or Windows mobile device on the Oanda website.

**Packing Suggestions:**

Be wise when packing. Students who study abroad often report that they have brought too much, especially clothing. You have to consider your destination and the duration of your trip. Remember that you will often be able to buy what you need abroad. It is very likely that you will buy items while abroad that you will want to carry home. Comfort and practicality are keys for both clothing and shoes. You will notice that people from different countries may wear more or less formal clothing than Americans. The style of clothing and fashion varies. Before you pack, check out videos that show people in your host country and notice how they tend to

dress. Do they look formal? Do they tend to wear dark colors? Fitting into a culture will help you connect to people and will improve your travel safety.

Suggested items:

- Travel Documents (Passport and visa, photocopies of airline tickets and rail passes)
- Driver's license
- Emergency contact information
- Travelers' checks, credit cards, ATM cards, calling card, etc.
- Acceptance letter from program (if applicable)
- Sturdy, interchangeable clothing appropriate for your host country's culture, and climate. Do not pack many clothes. Bring basics such as socks, underwear, shorts (if appropriate), skirts/pants, shirts, pajamas, sweaters
- Waterproof walking shoes and Flip-flops/shower shoe
- All prescriptions in their original bottles, contact lenses and solutions, nasal spray, other medical appliance that you may need
- Money belt and neck wallet to secure all your personal documents and money
- Laptop computer, iPod, an Mp3 player, camera and journal to document your experience, and chargers for your electronic devices.
- Contact information for your host institutions and the Office of Global Engagement at Rivier University.
- Medical/Health Insurance Card.
- OGE Study Abroad Handbook.
- Outlet converter

**Research Your Host Country:**

You have a terrific opportunity, and a deep responsibility to learn as much as possible about the host country to which you will be traveling. You will find updated travel information on the [Department of State website](#). The site includes valuable information about the current political climate, security/crime, health conditions and medical facilities, entry and currency requirements and the location of the US Embassy or Consulate. Research more about your host country online, travel books and newspapers or magazines.

The following websites could help you explore topics pertaining to health, safety, culture adjustments:

- <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/> (U.S. Department of State)
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (Center for Disease Control)
- [www.onlinenewspapers.com/](http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/) (international newspapers)
- [www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)
- [www.culturecrossing.net/](http://www.culturecrossing.net/)
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>

The Office of Global Engagement has resource materials available for you, and don't forget that Regina Library has terrific online resources to help you get to know your host culture.

### **Communication:**

Before you depart make sure you have a plan in place on how you will communicate with your friends and family back home. They will be eager to hear about your experiences abroad. Establish a communication plan based on the access to communication tools in your host country as well as your academic requirements and cultural explorations. Check-in with your family upon arrival; let them know that you arrived safely.

- Phones: Research several options to call home. Check the availability of cell phones in your host country when you arrive. Purchase a phone and SIM card upon arrival. Check with your program provider ahead of time for recommendations. Contact your current phone provider; they may have options available for using your phone abroad. Don't forget to check the fee, it can be quite expensive. Use international calling cards. Chat using your computer and Skype if you can. There are available apps for your mobile device such as Tango, Viber and sign up at ATT International call for reduced rate. To call internationally you must dial the country code prior to the local number. USA's calling code is 1. To obtain a full listing of country codes, visit: [www.countrycallingcodes.com](http://www.countrycallingcodes.com)
- Email: Continue checking your Rivier University email account while you are abroad—this is the official form of communication at Rivier and the means by which the University will notify you of important changes or events.
- Mail: Have your mail forwarded to an updated address here in the states while you are overseas. Contact the Mailroom at 603-897-8524 to request that your mail be forwarded to you accordingly.

## Rivier University's Policies and Pre-departure Paperwork:

### Academics:

#### Course Selection:

Meet with an academic advisor to discuss course selection for your major, minor and core requirements. The application for Approval to Study Abroad will need to be completed and signed by your faculty/academic advisor. If you are participating in Study Abroad through Fairfield University, please visit their website at <http://www.fairfield.edu/sa/index.html> and create a student login. Contact OGE at [globalengagement@rivier.edu](mailto:globalengagement@rivier.edu) if you need assistance.

#### Course Withdrawal:

If you must withdraw from a course, contact the Rivier University's registrar office immediately at [askregistrar@rivier.edu](mailto:askregistrar@rivier.edu) since withdrawing may impact your registration status. Follow the host institution's normal withdrawal protocol and officially withdraw by their deadline.

## RIVIER UNIVERSITY

### Financial Aid Information for Study Abroad Programs

If you wish to receive financial aid to help pay for study abroad), you **MUST FIRST** apply for financial aid in the same manner as students studying on campus: by completing the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** form and filing it with the processor. The FAFSA is available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). **Financial aid for study abroad MAY NOT be available for FAFSAs filed after the deadlines!**

In addition to completing the FAFSA, **study abroad students** must contact [the Office of Global Engagement \(OGE\)](#) to verify that their chosen study abroad program meets eligibility requirements for transfer of credit to Rivier University. If the program is approved, the student must obtain cost information from OGE (i.e.: tuition and fees, housing, meals, airfare, insurance, any included excursions/field trips, visa fee, ground transportation, etc.). Provide this information to your financial aid advisor who will prepare an estimated study abroad budget for you.

You must turn in your study abroad financial aid/budget worksheet to the Office of Financial Aid by the following deadline dates:

**Fall** - Last week in May

**Spring** - First week in November

After you have submitted the study abroad financial aid/budget worksheet, the financial aid advisor will review your file to determine whether he/she can make any adjustments in your aid package. Based on the outcome of the adjustment made to your aid package, **you are now at a**

**critical crossroad: you must decide “to go” or “not to go” and inform your study abroad advisor of your decision immediately.**

While students may use federal financial aid for study abroad and exchange programs, federal regulations limit students receiving federal financial aid to no more than two semesters of study abroad or exchange at participating foreign universities or programs. Generally, this means that you may study abroad at more than one foreign university or program, but may not transfer more than two semesters of study abroad or exchange credit to Rivier University. Federal regulations mandate that no more than 25% of a student’s educational program or coursework be provided by a foreign university. All credit from all foreign institutions accepted as credit toward the degree is counted in this two semester limit. If you are unsure of your federal aid status, please consult with your financial aid advisor.

### **Home University Tuition Policy & Portability of Rivier University Financial Aid for Study Abroad**

In order to give all students, not only those who can afford it, access to study abroad, Rivier University has a home university tuition model. This tuition and financial aid model makes study abroad more accessible for all students, regardless of financial means, just as it does for all on-campus programming. The model reflects the University’s commitment to “deliver on the promise” of global engagement, as outlined in Theme Five of the current Rivier University Strategic Plan. The program, initiated in the 2013/14 academic year as a pilot program, will have limited funding dispersed through a joint effort of the Offices of Financial Aid and Global Engagement. Individuals may be awarded up to \$4,000 for their semester long study abroad experience.

### **Rivier University Policies Regarding Semester-Long Study Abroad**

Students of all majors are encouraged to include study abroad experience in their curriculum at Rivier University, though some programs work more easily than other. The following are the policies governing semester-long study abroad at Rivier University.

- To be eligible for the Rivier Study Abroad Program, students must have completed one academic year as a full-time student at Rivier University, hold a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5, and not have any existing or pending judicial sanctions. Students must apply by the published application deadline: March 15th for fall semester and October 15th for the spring semester.
- The study abroad program site must be approved by the Office of Global Engagement.
- Students must maintain a full-time status by registering as a study abroad student through Rivier University for the semester abroad.

- Students studying abroad are required to receive prior approval from the Office of Advising and their Faculty Academic Advisor for all courses listed on their Course Approval Form.
- Students who have not completed the Rivier University Application Form and Enrollment Forms and who have not attended the Pre-Departure Session prior to studying abroad are not considered to be studying abroad through the Office of Global Engagement. As such academic credit will be reviewed after completing and might not be transferred to Rivier University for studying abroad during the academic year.
- Rivier University students who participate for a semester/year abroad will pay full-time Rivier University tuition plus the \$500 Study Abroad Fee. Students will pay the program provider or host institution for the room and board (if applicable) fees.
- Rivier University students wishing to receive institutional financial aid must complete the full financial aid application by the financial aid deadline. Eligibility for merit and need-based aid will be assessed using by the Office of Financial Aid, with specific input for Study Abroad from the Office of Global Engagement.

**For additional funding resources, please visit <http://www.studyabroadfunding.org/>.**

### **University Study Abroad Policies:**

#### **Travel:**

International travel is best undertaken by well-informed, very aware explorers. The University strongly encourages all members of the University community who are contemplating travel abroad for educational or other purposes to review thoroughly and to familiarize themselves with the political, health, crime, and other safety-related conditions prevailing in any country and specific locations within it.

Visit the Department of State's website for international travel information at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_4965.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html) to obtain information such as travel warnings, etc.

The following provisions apply to all Rivier University students who wish to undertake international travel funded by Rivier, awarded credit by Rivier, or in connection with a trip abroad by a faculty or student organization:

All Rivier University students are responsible for their own safety when traveling internationally, whether or not their work abroad is funded by Rivier awards or credit by Rivier. Before departure, undergraduate students traveling abroad with Rivier funding, studying abroad for credit from Rivier, or participating in a recognized student organization trip abroad,

as individuals or in groups, must provide the University a statement in a form provided by the University, acknowledging their understanding of the risks of such travel, affirming that they have reviewed and understand relevant safety-related materials, and assuming the risks related to their international travel.

Students under the age of 18 must obtain a parental signature on the Rivier University Travel Abroad Acknowledgment and Release Form.

Rivier University may not fund, award credit for, or otherwise sponsor or support any international undergraduate academic or extracurricular project in any country for which:

1. The U.S. State Department has issued a warning that orders departure of U.S. dependents and non-emergency personnel; recommends that U.S. citizens depart the country; advises U.S. citizens against all travel to the country; or recommends that U.S. citizens defer non-essential travel to the country.

2. If such a warning comes into effect after the student's departure, the University reserves the right to end its sponsorship at that time, and to require the student to end the trip and leave the country. Such determinations will be made on a case by case basis. During their travel abroad, students should monitor the State Department at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis\\_pa\\_tw\\_1168.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html) for up-to-date information about changing conditions.

NOTE: Register with your country's embassy or consulate: U.S. citizens can register through the U.S. State Department's travel website at <http://www.state.gov/>

### **Immunizations and Health Insurance:**

All students must discuss their travel plans with medical provider and obtain required vaccinations and, if necessary, obtain adequate medications for the duration of their stay abroad. In case of an emergency while abroad, all students should carry an up-to-date copy of their immunization records and a medical profile.

Travelers who have a chronic medical condition, are pregnant, or are traveling to Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics and the South Pacific should meet with their own doctor at least four to six weeks before departure to discuss immunizations and prescriptions.

Their medical appointment covers general advice about travel and must take place before any immunizations will be given. The clinician will review your immunization record and discuss any precautions that should be taken during your trip. Appointments for immunization must be scheduled immediately after the planning visit. Should the medical provider advise a physical examination, this must also be scheduled prior to departure.

**Photographs and Video While Traveling:**

Rivier University encourages its students and community in taking personal photos, videos. Remember that the people you are capturing on film are not objects of curiosity. It is advised to ask for permission when taking people photos. Be tactful and respectful.

If you intend to use such images publicly, such as in blogs and websites keep in mind that there are some guidelines to follow. Most countries have laws that protect the use of images of minors unless you have explicit permission from parents or guardians. Since this permission is always best in writing, the University has a release form that you should use whenever possible. There are times when it is not possible to obtain such a form, in that case, it can be handwritten and signed. Photo release forms are available at the Office of Global Engagement.

**Pre-departure Paperwork:**

Rivier University students must complete all forms below before they leave. Completed forms must be sent to the Office of Global Engagement at Memorial Hall 120.

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO STUDY ABROAD****TRAVEL ABROAD ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RELEASE FORM****OVERSEAS CONTACT INFORMATION****MEDICAL CERTIFICATE and EMERGENCY CONTACT****HEALTH INSURANCE CERTIFICATE****Rivier University Student Life and Housing, SODEXO and Mailroom:**

Please call the Student Life and Housing at 603-897-8244, SODEXO at 603-897-8243 and the Mailroom at 603-897-8524 to notify them of your study abroad plan and then make necessary arrangement for your return.

## While You Are Abroad

### **Adjusting to a new culture:**

Cultural adjustment, and sometimes even “culture shock,” is a normal part of study abroad. It shows that you are experiencing the differences between your culture and that of the host country.

Many people go through different phases of the process of adjustment several times, so parts of the curve in the diagram may repeat themselves. For instance, at significant times such as important family dates or festivals you may feel distressed or lonely, while at other times you feel quite settled. However, many people have reported that this model has reflected something of their experience and they have found it helpful to realize they are not the only ones to have had these feelings. The process can be broken down into 5 stages:

- 1. The “honeymoon” stage.** When you first arrive in a new culture, differences are intriguing and you may feel excited, stimulated and curious. At this stage you are still protected by the close memory of your home culture.
- 2. The “distress” stage.** A little later, differences create an impact and you may feel confused, isolated or inadequate as cultural differences intrude and familiar supports (e.g. family or friends) are not immediately available.
- 3. The “Re-integration” stage.** Next you may reject the differences you encounter. You may feel angry or frustrated, or hostile to the new culture. At this stage you may be conscious mainly of how much you dislike it compared to home. Don’t worry, as this is quite a healthy reaction. You are reconnecting with what you value about yourself and your own culture.
- 4. The “Autonomy” stage.** Differences and similarities are accepted. You may feel relaxed, confident, more like an old hand as you become more familiar with situations and feel well able to cope with new situations based on your growing experience.
- 5. The “Independence” stage.** Differences and similarities are valued and important. You may feel full of potential and able to trust yourself in all kinds of situations. Most situations become enjoyable and you are able to make choices according to your preferences and values.

You should be able to adjust to a new culture if you keep an open mind. Techniques such as learning as much as possible about the host country prior to departure, looking for the reasons things are done or perceived differently, meeting local people and finding friends with whom you can discuss your reactions, reading and speaking the local language, and familiarizing yourself with local viewpoints and customs. You should emerge from the experience with the ability to function in two or more cultures with confidence. Some of the issues you may want to familiarize yourself with about your host country are traditions or practices related to

appropriate dress, food, table manners, greeting, gift giving, hygiene, punctuality, religion, tipping, transportation, physical contact, and dating.

### **LGBT Students Abroad:**

It is important to be aware of the laws pertaining to homosexuality in other countries, as well as the prevailing attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. The ILGA website is a good resource for information: <http://lgbt.org/> Some countries are more liberal on these matters than the U.S. and some less. Whatever the general rule, there will always be pockets of difference and personal idiosyncrasies. You should certainly talk with other students who have been where you will be.

Read up on issues relating to gender, ethnicity and religion, sexual orientation, and disabilities for your host country and countries to which you will travel. Foreign universities often have student groups organized around these issues (check your host university's web site), and some travel books will cover these issues in depth.

### **Useful resources:**

“What's up with culture?” is a web-based training resource, designed for US students abroad but potentially of interest to any international student wanting to learn more about cultural transition.

For information please visit the following websites:

<http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/index.htm>

<http://overseas.iu.edu/lesbigay/> (NAFSA: Rainbow Special Interest Group)

<http://www.journeywoman.com/> (The Premier Resource for Women)

<http://www.miusa.org/> (Mobility international USA)

### **Computing Support:**

For software and other technology questions, you can also contact Rivier University's IT Helpdesk at 603-897-846 or email at [itsupport@rivier.edu](mailto:itsupport@rivier.edu)

### **Staying Safe and Obeying Local Law:**

Depending on where you are traveling, you may be in a place with less, more, or the same level of street crime as in the U.S. In any case, being a foreigner and not knowing the customs and patterns of local behavior may increase the odds of your becoming the victim of crimes such as fraud, robbery, or theft.

While abroad, you should remember that you are a representative of Rivier University and must comply with RU's rules, standards and instructions for student conduct and behavior, as well as any stated codes of conduct from the host institution/program provider.

You should familiarize your new environment by reading all information that your program director provides or recommends. Explore your new neighborhood during the day and become familiar with areas around you. When in doubt, ask program staff and students which areas you

should avoid. Always carry the address and telephone number of your home with you until you have memorized them. Become familiar with laws and customs of the host country. It is very important you listen to security recommendations provided by your program provider or host institution. Stay well-informed about local and regional politics and conditions. Read newspapers with international coverage of local issues as well as local publications. Check the U.S. State Department Travel Advisories regularly at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

Always pay attention to what is going on in your community. Take a reliable cab or walk with a friend rather than walking alone at night. Do not go into unsafe or unknown areas alone. Be selective and cautious in giving your name or address to strangers. Use money belts or a concealed purse for your passport, visa, money, credit cards and other documents. If you want to explore a city, leave your belongings in a secure "checked luggage" area. Know where the nearest police station and hospital are, and keep emergency numbers handy. Avoid demonstrations. Do your best to blend in; dress like the locals, use the language, be polite and low-key. The more confident you seem, the less likely you will be a target for trouble. Don't gather at "American" hangouts. Avoid carrying photo cameras, video cameras, I-pods, etc. exposed to the public eye while walking in the streets, especially if you are walking alone. Remember to leave your itinerary with the on-site staff and with your family. Your parents and friends will have concerns while you are away even if you feel safe and sound. Keep in contact with them to let them know how you are. Alert your on-site program or exchange staff of any concerns and should something happen, be proactive about communicating to the on-site staff that you are doing well. Remember to leave your contact information at the Pre-departure information session.

### **Emergency Response/Evacuation Plan**

#### **In the unlikely event of a major emergency that may impact the health or safety of all students in the host country:**

- The Global Engagement Team will contact all students to ensure that they are accounted for and are safe, as well as provide them with information and instructions.
- The Global Engagement Team will contact the U.S Embassy or Consulate.
- The Global Engagement Team will gather information related to the event causing the on emergency, possible danger to U.S. citizens, impact, intensity of the emergency, and the feasibility of continuing classes.
- Depending on the situation, the Global Engagement Team may or may not gather the students together. This will depend on the specific situation encountered.
- The Global Engagement Team will keep a detailed log of all events concerning this situation.
- The Global Engagement Team will immediately contact Rivier Leadership and provide a briefing on the situation, including any recommendations the AVP may have regarding the program.

- Rivier Leadership may contact the U.S. State Department for further information and provide that to the Crisis Management Team.
- The Fairfield related team on site will take immediate measures to ensure the health and safety of the students, including gathering additional information, tailoring an evacuation plan to the situation, arranging transportation and developing a daily communication plan with key organizations.
- The Global Engagement Team will post information on its website, as well as reach out to the students' emergency contacts and host institutions to apprise them of the situation and steps that Rivier is taking.

**Additional Information in case of an emergency abroad:**

Should you encounter difficulties or problems that you cannot easily solve on your own, you should follow these steps:

1. Take the necessary steps to secure your immediate physical safety (e.g. call 911 equivalents, go to the hospital, and seek shelter).
2. Keep your phone line open and check e-mail if you can. In the case of a serious international incident, OGE at Rivier University will try to reach you by using the **contact information** that you provided.
3. Once the immediate situation has been addressed, you should contact your sponsoring department/program at OGE or Fairfield University to inform them of the situation. Emergency assistance is available through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, operated by the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. If you need to contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services from overseas call 202/501-4444. Consular personnel know the local government agencies and resources in the country. They can help you:
  - Replace a stolen passport
  - Contact family and/or friends
  - Obtain medical care
  - Address emergency needs that arise as a result of a crime
  - Obtain general information about the local criminal justice process and
  - information about your case
  - Obtain information about local resources to assist victims, including crime
  - victim assistance and victim compensation programs

- Obtain a list of local English-speaking attorneys

**Emergency Contacts:** When designating emergency contacts, students should designate their parents as their emergency contacts whenever possible. This way, information regarding any emergency situation will automatically be distributed to parents.

**Communication:** Students should provide accurate contact information for themselves to their parents and home institutions. Students should also stay in touch with their parents or other emergency contacts in the event of any emergency.

**Protecting Your Valuables:**

Secure all your travel documents in a secure place; scan and email them to yourself and family. Be creative in noting your bank cards and your pin numbers and secure as well. Be extra cautious when using ATM machines. Watch your belongings, use pocket books or money belts. Be aware of ploys to distract. Luggage locks are safe and recommended. Do not ever count your money in public; do not bring a lot of cash when going out with friends or exploring places. Secure your belongings in hotels and hostels. Consider using a public locker if there is no safe place for valuables and do not leave valuables lying around. Do not engage with strangers, who are looking for fight, remember your safety first. Avoid unnecessary engagement and get help.

## After You Get Back

### **Re-adjusting to Rivier University:**

You are preparing to go abroad, but it is not too early to begin thinking about the day you will return home. Questions such as "Why did I choose to study abroad?" and "What do I want to accomplish during my time here?" can help you clarify how you are going to integrate your international experience into your academic, professional and personal goals for the future.

Preparing for the surprises that often greet travelers after an extended period abroad will enable you to turn what, for some, is a very awkward time into a productive one. (And your photo album will hopefully reflect it all.) Just as you had to adjust overseas, you may face adjustment issues at home

### **Change and adaptation:**

As one returnee explains, "Living abroad has a deep, broadening effect on a person- an effect that I didn't realize until my return." For some people, living abroad and having those changes occur outside of the United States can magnify those experiences, thus causing the return home to be a bit unsettling. In addition, some of the experiences are specific to being abroad and could not have occurred in the United States. You may have become increasingly sure of yourself and possibly have gained a more mature or focused attitude about your future. Some of these new views and attitudes may be in conflict with the views and attitudes of family and friends. They may question your new way of thinking and doing things or even pressure you to "reform."

### **New skills:**

You likely acquired some new skills while abroad. These may include discovering a new way to do an old task, a different perspective on your field of study, or increasing your foreign language skills. These new skills will now become a part of your daily life. Increasing ease of use with your foreign language will probably have one of the greatest impacts. If you have learned to become dependent on these skills to communicate from day to day, then it may feel strange for you to revert back to your native language. You may feel frustrated and depressed if you cannot communicate your new ideas, skills or opinions, and this can be distressing. Again, patience, flexibility, and time will be required as it was at the beginning of your sojourn.

**Loss of Status:**

In your host country you may have been seen as an informal ambassador from the United States. This gave you a certain status of being "special." When you return home, you are just like everyone else and the loss of feeling a bit "special" can be a factor that you must deal with in your readjustment. One returnee describes it this way: "Being in a foreign country as a foreign visitor, you are to a certain extent a 'special person'; your new views, accent and lifestyle are all interesting to your hosts. As such, you will receive a lot of attention, make friends and, generally, be popular. However, when returning 'home', you become again a 'normal person'. I found it very difficult to make that transition."

**Friendships:**

Now that you have studied abroad, you obviously have a new circle of friends. Leaving your new friends can be, for many, the most difficult part of reentry. Having to abandon intense friendships, girl/boyfriends, and/or cultural supports, frequently brings disturbing feelings characteristic of those associated in a grieving process.

Upon your return, friends at home will ask about your experiences and appear to be interested. They will often show a slight fascination for your adventures but this may quickly fade. You should be prepared for their cursory interest in your stories and pictures. After a while you may find that your friends are more eager to talk about what has gone on in their lives as opposed to hearing more about your life abroad. When you talk "too much" about your experience, people may accuse you of being elitist even though that may not be your intention. People are often threatened by new and unusual points of view if they have not had a similar experience. As much as you need to talk about your recent time away from home, it is advisable to be sensitive to the attitudes and feelings of others. Be patient. If the friendship is worth maintaining, adjustment can and will be made; if not, developing new friendships can be as exhilarating as traveling.

**Family relationships:**

The "changed you" will have to re-adjust to life in the United States, and, for some, this can be difficult. It can be a surprise to learn that you are not the only one affected by re-entry. Remember, and be aware, that people at home change too, so expect things to be different. You and your family may view each other differently upon your return it is normal for you to desire to hold onto the person who you have become. The "new" you cannot be discarded or forgotten for the "old" you. However, you and your family must come to terms with that "new" you and continue to build upon your existing relationship from this point forward. It will require commitment to work toward mutual respect and understanding of each other's views. You may find that you have a totally different relationship with your family.

**University Life:**

You may face a new set of re-adjustment issues upon return to academic life. If you have become very accustomed to a different type of academic system, you will have to re-adjust to RU'S way of handling things. For example, some students experience a greater amount of academic independence abroad than they had previously experienced. If you have found that

academic freedom is particularly gratifying and challenging then the re-adjustment to a system that is more structured can be difficult. Returning to university life you may also feel a bit “removed” from your major and department.

### **Challenges of readjustment:**

As stated earlier, no readjustment experience is the same for everyone. You may go through re-entry much differently than someone else. There are several variables that may affect the degree of difficulty faced by individuals during re-entry. Some of these variables include:

- Recognize your academic experience abroad might differ from RU
- Expectations of difficulty upon return
- Length of time spent abroad
- Readiness to return home, to the United States, or to RU
- Degree of cultural difference or similarity
- Changes and perceived changes in the home environment
- Support networks

### **Length of readjustment period:**

The length of time that the readjustment phase lasts will, of course, vary from person to person, but it will also depend on the level of intensity you experience. If you experience a very high level of intensity your adjustment will most likely take longer than if you experience a very low level of intensity. One returning student said: "I have been back 4 months and I still find it very hard to communicate about my experiences and often I feel I must hide many of the new attitudes or knowledge I may have gained that seems at odds with my old life." In addition, the length of time the re-adjustment lasts depends on you and how you cope with the situations that occur.

### **Coping Strategies:**

The good news is this phase of readjustment to life in the United States does not last forever! Here are some suggestions of ways to make this phase a bit easier on you and your family and friends.

Acknowledge your adjustment first, and foremost, acknowledge the re-entry phase as part of the study abroad experience. Just as you had to give yourself time while going through the culture shock phase (if you did experience culture shock) you must also give yourself time to go through the re-entry phase. As one returnee stated in a survey, "Don't blame yourself, give yourself time. I'd have felt less guilty and peculiar if I'd realized it was a common phenomenon."

You can begin preparing for re-entry before you come home. Answer the following questions for yourself:

- How can I help myself adjust to being home?
- How have I changed during my time abroad?
- What is the one idea or experience that I want to share with my friends?

- What is the one experience I want to share with my family?
- How can I help my friends and family understand the “new” me?
- What do I need to do in order to take care of myself during this new transition period?

Once you have completed your study abroad experience, you must **complete a program evaluation** form. This form is available at the Office of Global Engagement.

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