

UNIVERSITY Parent

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE TWIN CITIES CAMPUS

UNIVERSITY
OF MINNESOTA

Office for Student Affairs

Parents Help to Make Study Abroad Successful

Family members go through a range of emotions when a student decides to study abroad, much like when a student first leaves for college—excitement, fear, distress at having the student so far away. Students, too, go through a mix of emotions. Parents can help make study abroad more successful by understanding their own and their student's feelings throughout the experience.

Before departure

Students need to know they have your support and can talk to you about the program. While considering the opportunities at the destination, also discuss any concerns you have and ask about your student's concerns.

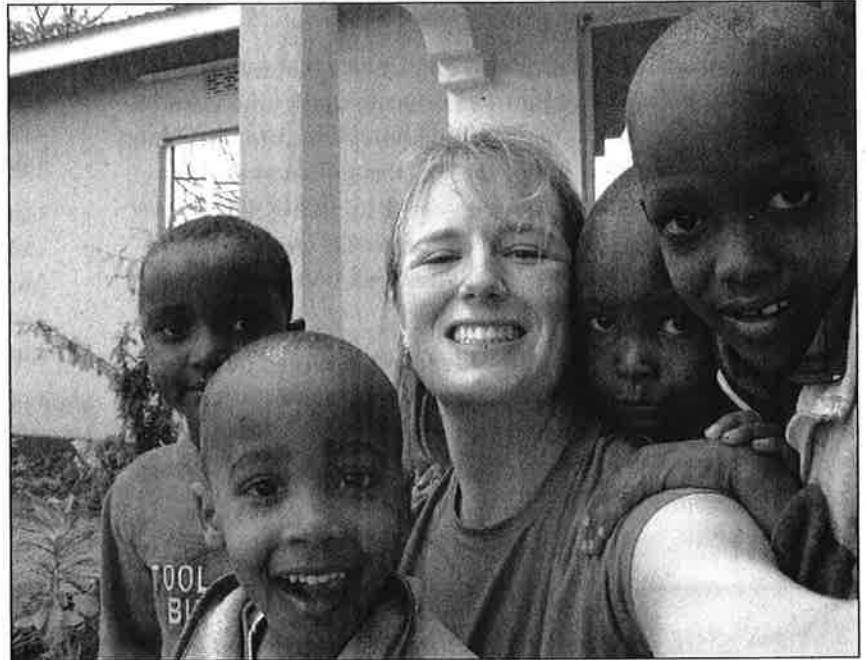
Ask about your student's goals for the program. They should know how the program applies to their field of study, the cultural and social adjustments they can expect, and the language difficulties they may face.

Talk about ways to stay in touch and make arrangements for phone calls. Many countries have affordable short-term international cell phone contracts. Your long-distance provider likely has a reduced plan for international rates and collect calls. Internet communication, such as Skype or Free World Dial-up, can be a cost-effective option. But keep in mind that some study abroad sites may not provide online access and your student would need to visit an Internet cafe.

Talk about how your student will handle everyday financial needs, as well as emergency funds. For international travel, a credit card with provisions for cash withdrawal is very helpful. Credit cards and bank cash cards provide access to local currency at the best exchange rates, and cash machines are available in nearly every community.

Buy maps of cities or areas where your student will be staying and traveling. You will feel more comfortable if you can connect your student with a specific location or neighborhood.

Ask your student to suggest articles or books about the area, and look for guidebooks on the host country or city. Get copies of the guidebooks your student plans to take along.



Every parent's dream: their child enjoying the study abroad experience. This University student hangs out with neighborhood boys in Tanzania.

During study abroad

During the first few weeks, your student may call or write about difficulties and frustrations. Something as routine as buying groceries, counting change, catching a bus, or using the telephone will require effort. Keep in mind that you're not expected to solve problems; your student just needs to vent! And don't worry too much if all you hear are complaints. Your student is undoubtedly also having some remarkably good experiences.

As the weeks pass, the frustration level will decrease, and you may hear from your student less often. During the last few weeks of a program, students feel the pressure to complete their studies. They want to see and do all they can, so communication may dwindle.

Even if you have regular contact by phone or Internet, send mail. Students appreciate as much word from home as they can get. Ask your student to send postcards and letters describing outings and daily life.

Encourage your student to tell you about simple things, such as food, the route to class, or favorite shopkeepers. Ask your

student to draw a floor plan or send a photo of his or her living space. You'll feel better if you can picture your student in this new setting. If students are in a very different culture, it may be hard for them to describe things to you. Think of ways to suggest topics; e.g., "I was working in the garden today, and I was wondering what kinds of flowers and vegetables grow there."

For some students, adjusting to a new culture may be so severe that they refuse to participate in their new community. Be alert for signs that your student is excessively critical or spending too much time sending e-mail or calling home, rather than experiencing the trip. If you're concerned about your student's physical or mental health, safety, or well-being, contact the U's Learning Abroad Center (www.umabroad.umn.edu).

Upon re-entry

An international experience doesn't end when your student returns. He or she will be gaining perspective and understanding for about six months after coming home. Returning students make comparisons about nearly every aspect of American life—food, politics, sanitation, economics—and it can be difficult for friends and parents to understand the persistent questioning. If a student feels that listeners don't understand, he or she may fall silent or not respond to questions.

For the first few days after your student comes home, he or she may experience jet lag and be exhausted when you want to talk or exuberant when you're ready for bed. So, plan a special time to sit with your student to hear about the trip and look at souvenirs and mementos.

The U's Learning Abroad Center has some tips to help you and your student understand and incorporate the study abroad experience into life at home:

- Encourage your student to contact the center after the experience and continue the learning process with other returning students.
- In the week or two after your student returns, ask about the small details rather than overall impressions. During this period, students tend to talk most easily about the daily routines they established, the food they ate, and the people they met and are now missing.
- A few weeks after your student comes home, watch for symptoms of depression—low energy, problems with sleep and appetite, and difficulty concentrating. Some go through a period of depression after they return. At the same time, however, recognize that your student has undergone a major experience and is likely to be different than before.
- Bear with the two common phrases: "When I was in (Mexico, France, Ghana, Singapore)..." And "It's too hard to explain." It can be difficult to keep listening when you can't easily envision the experience, but it's important for your student to talk.

Your student's experience can have a long-term effect on you. Your awareness of his or her host country will increase significantly, and you, too, could be inspired to learn a new language or travel abroad.

When students go abroad, should parents visit?

Seeing your student function in a different culture can be one of the most gratifying experiences of raising a child. Knowing that your son has mastered the transportation system of London or your daughter can read a ferry schedule in Greek is heartwarming proof of your child's intelligence, maturity, and independence.

If you decide to visit your student, however, keep in mind that his or her first priority is unlikely to be you. Study abroad programs require students to be in class or working on projects a large part of their time. Students also need to spend time with their classmates—they're all working through the same issues, and the support they provide to each other is invaluable.

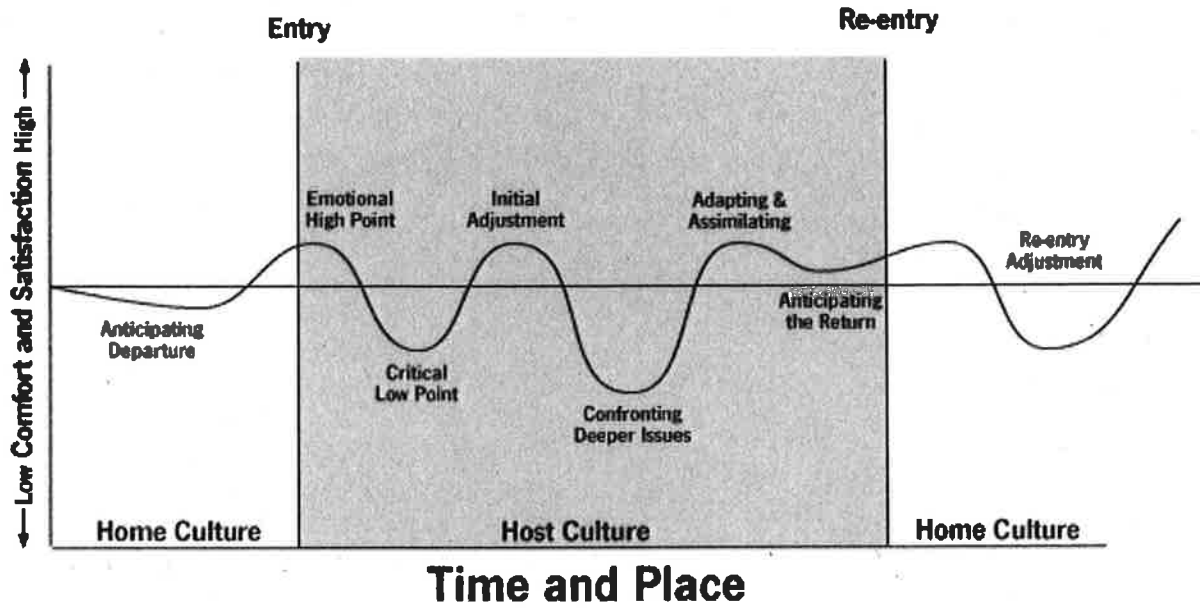
Do not visit during the first few weeks of the program. Give your student time to adjust. Also, do not visit the last week of the program. Students need to finish up projects and be with classmates. Even if the program is relatively short, they most likely have made very close friends and will want to spend this time with each other.

If possible, time your arrival for a weekend or a break period so your student won't have to choose between you and classes. Be prepared for some "role reversal" while your child teaches you to get around and explains the monetary system to you.

Do not rely on your student to take care of you throughout your visit. Once you've learned a few basics and spent a couple of days with your student, set out on your own. Your student may have suggestions for nearby places to visit while he or she is in class. If possible, take a side trip for a few days to allow your student to get back to coursework and friends.

Keep in mind that you may be on vacation, but your student is not. Spend enough time with your student to appreciate his or her accomplishments, but not so much that you detract from the student's program. By sharing the experience and living through the challenges of adjusting to a new country and culture, you gain appreciation of what your student has achieved, and it's something both of you can talk about in the months and years to come.

For more information on study abroad, contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000, email UMabroad@umn.edu, or visit www.UMabroad.umn.edu.



Power of Attorney

Do I need a Power of Attorney while I am abroad?

Many students who are studying, working, or traveling abroad appoint a trusted person to take care of their personal, business, and financial affairs while they are out of the country. The Learning Abroad Center recommends that all students, especially financial aid students, arrange for a Power of Attorney. Some instances when a Power of Attorney may be necessary are:

- Completing financial aid paperwork
- Handling issues related to deposit of financial aid checks
- Processing banking transactions, including checks made payable to you and the University of Minnesota
- Processing insurance transactions

What are the steps to assigning a Power of Attorney?

Granting a Power of Attorney is a legal process that involves the drafting of a document which assigns to another person the power to act as your legal representative (Attorney in Fact) in specific situations. There are two ways to go about assigning Power of Attorney. The first is to make an appointment with an attorney or other type of legal service to draft a Power of Attorney document. This may require a fee which will cover advice on the legal implications of assigning Power of Attorney, the drafting of a Power of Attorney document, and the notarizing of that document. If you are a University of Minnesota–Twin Cities student, the University Student Legal Services (USLS) usually does not charge. If you are a student from another college, check with your home institution to find out if you have legal services available to you.

The second approach does not require a lawyer's assistance and involves purchasing a generic Power of Attorney form from an office supply store, filling it out yourself, and then having your signature(s) notarized.

Since granting Power of Attorney is a legal process with serious implications, the Learning Abroad Center strongly recommends that you seek legal advice before drafting a Power of Attorney document. Note: If someone is currently taking care of your financial paperwork, this does not mean they have Power of Attorney. It may only be granted by completing the legal document with a notarized signature.

Who should I ask to be my Attorney in Fact?

Select a person you consider trustworthy to make decisions in your best interests and sign on your behalf. Most students select a parent, long-term significant other, or long-term friend. A casual acquaintance is not recommended. Staff in study abroad offices should not be asked to act on your behalf as it may be considered a conflict of interest.

What type of Power of Attorney form do I need?

There are several types of Power of Attorney forms. Students usually only need to complete the statutory short form, as you will most likely limit the powers granted and the duration.

How can the University Student Legal Services help me with a Power of Attorney?

If you are currently enrolled as a University of Minnesota student taking at least 6 credits, or were enrolled at the time you were accepted on a study abroad program, you are entitled to use the services of the University Student Legal Services (USLS) office located at 160 West Bank Union Skyway. USLS can provide you with a Power of Attorney form and advise you on the legal implications of assigning various powers to another individual. For current fee-paying University of Minnesota students, there is no charge for these services. Call USLS at 612.624.1001 to schedule an appointment (walk-in meetings are not available). Be sure to take proof of your student status to your initial appointment. If you choose not to use USLS, consult with a lawyer recommended by family or friends.

For what period of time should I have a Power of Attorney?

The Power of Attorney should include the entire time you plan to be away, including terms of study, work, and travel.

Who should I notify that I have granted a Power of Attorney?

You should provide a copy of the Power of Attorney form to the Office of Student Finance and the office sponsoring the program you have selected, if they will be processing financial aid paperwork or payments for you while you are away. Also, provide a copy to the Learning Abroad Center in case your contact person needs to contact us.

How far in advance should I begin arranging Power of Attorney?

You should take care of arranging your Power of Attorney well in advance of your departure and notify the appropriate offices. There can be up to a five-day waiting period if you use the services of USLS to complete the Power of Attorney forms.

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The Study Abroad Folder

To be sure you have important information regarding your student's travels and so you are prepared for things that may come up while your student is abroad, we suggest you create a Study Abroad Folder that is left at home. Sara, a returned study abroad student, created a "Spain Folder," which was always kept on top of the refrigerator at her parents' house, and everyone knew where it was. She says, "There were very few things that we ever had to use from the Spain Folder while I was gone, but perhaps, 'psychologically' everyone felt more relaxed knowing that, in case of an emergency, we would be well prepared."

THE STUDY ABROAD FOLDER COULD INCLUDE:

- 1) Copies of every important document
 - Passport
 - Visa
 - Acceptance letter from Learning Abroad Center/co-sponsor
 - Credit and debit cards (front and back)
 - CISI insurance information, copies of claim forms, copy of card
 - All flight information and tickets
 - Lodging information, if leaving early or coming back after the program
 - International Student Identity Card information (if your student purchased the card)
- 2) All his/her banking information (including directions on how to transfer money between savings and checking. We recommend that students have a parent or other trusted person as a co-signer on their accounts)
- 3) All his/her financial aid information
- 4) Any information someone would need to do his/her taxes in April (if he/she is abroad in spring)
- 5) A list of phrases/pronunciations in the appropriate language that you could use when calling your student, such as "Is Sara there?" "This is her mother," "This is not an emergency," etc. (Sara's mother said this was VERY helpful)
- 6) His/her phone number and address in the host country
- 7) Phone numbers and emails for:
 - His/her travel agent
 - The contact person at his/her site abroad*
 - His/her academic adviser
 - Learning Abroad Center study abroad staff*
 - Other critical University numbers, such as Financial Aid or the Business Office*
 - The numbers abroad of the people with whom s/he will be traveling and the US numbers of their families
 - 5 people in your hometown, fluent in the language of the country of study, whom you could contact in case of emergency

*=Included in the Program Guide or program materials

Resource List for Parents

1. Parents section of the LAC website: <http://umabroad.umn.edu/parents/index.html>
2. "Before They Go Abroad." James McCommons. Better Homes and Gardens magazine, August 2006 - <http://umabroad.umn.edu/parents/beforeArticle.html>
3. NAFSA's What Parents Need to Know! Before, During and After Education Abroad
4. Communicating with Strangers: An Introduction to Intercultural Communication, William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim
5. American-Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective, Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennett (especially chapters 4 and 5)
6. Survival Kit for Overseas Living, Robert Kohls
7. Trans-Cultural Study Guide, Grey Bryan, Ken Darrow, Dan Morrow, Brad Palmquist
8. Study Abroad For Dummies, Erin E. Sullivan
9. Surviving Re-entry: A Readjustment Manual for Parents
10. Resources for Parents from: diversityabroad.com

