

# MSID Ecuador

PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2020



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# Important Names & Addresses

## In the United States

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## Emergencies

In case of a serious emergency, contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000. If it is after business hours, a recording will give you a number to call. The Learning Abroad Center has someone on call for emergencies and can contact the on-site administrators if needed. Once overseas, you should contact your in-country program staff.

## In Ecuador

Your name (clearly spelled out)  
c/o Fundación Cimas del Ecuador  
Los Olivos E-15-18 y las Minas  
EC 170-149  
Quito, Ecuador

Phone(s): +593-2-241-4153, 593-2-241-2496

Note: Please direct pre-departure questions to the Learning Abroad Center, not to the on-site staff.

## Telephone Codes

- 011 International access code from the US. The code from other countries will be different.
- 593 Ecuador country code used for dialing from outside Ecuador.
- 2 Quito city code. Not necessary for calls from within Quito.

## Time Differences

Ecuador is one hour ahead of Minnesota during the winter and on the same time as Minnesota during months when the United States is on daylight saving time.

## Program Health & Safety

Program health and safety information is available at [global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html](http://global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html).



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# Introduction

## Purpose of This Handbook

Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, the Health & Safety Online Orientation (available in your confirmation checklist), and the information outlined in this handbook. These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at [UMabroad.umn.edu/parents](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/parents). It discusses topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel.

## Overview of the Program

### MSID & You

The information below can help ensure that your learning goals match MSID's program philosophy. Consider these statements and reflect on your own goals for the program.

### Introduction to MSID

#### *Mission*

Minnesota Studies in International Development (MSID) is devoted to the preparation of culturally sensitive individuals who are committed to the concepts of justice and sustainable development for all societies in our interdependent world. MSID seeks to engage students in dialogue and reciprocal learning with people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America concerning local and global development issues. Through grassroots internships and research experiences in development projects, MSID participants gain first-hand experience with the conditions, needs, and strengths of the countries involved with the program.

#### *Philosophy*

Founded in 1981, MSID is an interdisciplinary, academically, and personally challenging study abroad program, combining classroom learning with practical experience. At its core is a grassroots internship or research project with an agency striving to contribute to development or social justice. Participants often report this placement to be one of the most life-changing experiences they have had.

#### *Learning Outcomes*

- Foster an understanding of the global context through classroom and experiential learning
- Cultivate awareness and appreciation for development issues through engagement with diverse communities
- Translate insights gained into thoughtful and respectful long-term perspectives on concepts of social justice and sustainable development

- Strengthen communication skills through acquisition of local languages and cultural awareness
- Gain cross-cultural competencies through extended engagement at a local grassroots organization

### **Cultural Experience**

MSID seeks to maximize cultural immersion through:

- Internships
- Research projects
- Housing with host families

Written assignments help students bring their experiences back into the classroom and to relate them to course themes and concepts.

### **MSID focuses on issues of development.**

Learning from experience is the core of MSID. The program puts you in direct contact with the social and economic realities of actual communities and of people working within them to address complex problems. You will learn through classes, field trips, and an extended internship or research placement.

# Preparation & Planning

## Documents

### **Passport**

A valid passport with at least six months' remaining validity is required to enter Ecuador. If you don't have a passport, or your passport is due to expire within six months, you should apply for a passport or renew your current one right away. Passports can take 4–6 weeks to process, so it's important to begin this process early. More information is available at [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports).

### **Embassy Contact Info**

Always keep your passport in a safe place. If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the local police, the American Consulate or Embassy, and the on-site staff. To identify the consulate or embassy nearest you, consult [usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov).

### **Visa/Immigration Documents**

All MSID-Ecuador students who are US citizens will enter Ecuador on a tourist visa, which is granted upon arrival, and valid for 90 days. Therefore, it is not necessary to apply for a visa in advance.

Once in Ecuador, you will work with the staff at our partner organization to complete paperwork for an extension of your visa. The extension fee is already included in the program fee.

The Learning Abroad Center (LAC) will provide a letter confirming the visa process, which you should carry as you

travel to Ecuador, in case you are questioned by airline or immigration officials.

Please note that visa regulations are subject to change without prior notification, depending on current Ecuadorian immigration policies.

### **In-Country Process**

Once in country, your local MSID staff will give you advice about keeping your passport and visa secure.

Your passport and visa are valuable documents. Do not lose them. You cannot leave Ecuador without them. The process of replacing a passport is much easier if you have a copy of it. If your passport is lost or stolen, you should notify your local MSID staff, the local police, and the US Consulate.

### **Non-US Passport Holders**

Non-US citizens should check with the Ecuadorian embassy to determine any special regulations pertaining entry into Ecuador. They can also reach out to the Learning Abroad Center's Visa Assistant ([lacvisa@umn.edu](mailto:lacvisa@umn.edu)) for help.

### **Power of Attorney**

We encourage you to consider designating someone as your Power of Attorney while you are abroad. Your Power of Attorney can act as your legal representative in a number of situations, including banking and tax issues. For more information, review the information at [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney).

### **Safekeeping Important Documents**

Copy all of your important documents and store the copies separately from the originals. Leave an additional copy with someone in the US and keep an electronic copy in a secure location.

## **Flight & Transportation Information**

You will fly in and out of Mariscal Sucre International Airport in Quito (airport code: UIO). Arrival transportation from the airport into the city is provided by our partner organization, and the pick-up time aligns with the group flight arrival time. You have two options for booking your flight: booking the coordinated group flight, or booking a flight independently with a similar arrival time.

You will arrange your own transportation back to the airport at the end of the program.

### **Coordinated Flight**

The Learning Abroad Center works with Village Travel, a local travel agency, to arrange a coordinated flight for those participating in the semester and pre-session programs. The flight is optional, but strongly encouraged, and is arranged for those who want to fly with other program participants.

When available, the coordinated group flight itinerary will be posted on Village Travel's website at [villageinc.com](http://villageinc.com).

[villageinc.com/study-abroad/university-of-minnesota-learning-abroad-center/msid](http://villageinc.com/study-abroad/university-of-minnesota-learning-abroad-center/msid).

Village Travel is a full-service travel agency and can help you extend your stay in Ecuador or depart from a city other than Minneapolis. Students joining the program from other schools typically meet up with the group in the connecting US city (e.g., Atlanta or Dallas).

Due to visa restrictions, you will need to be able to demonstrate both your entry and exit dates from Ecuador. Therefore, you are required to purchase a round-trip ticket or a one-way ticket with proof of onward travel.

## **Flying Independently**

You are welcome to book your own flight and travel independently of the group. However, you must arrive by the time the group flight arrives. The group is collected from the airport in Quito and immediately taken into the city (about an hour away). If you arrive late and miss the group, you will be responsible for arranging and paying for your own transportation into the city.

If you have extenuating circumstances and cannot meet the group in Quito, please contact the program team prior to making travel arrangements to discuss your situation.

## **Important Policies**

Policies of the University of Minnesota and the LAC exist primarily for the protection and safety of LAC study abroad participants. The LAC expects all participants to read, understand, and adhere to the University of Minnesota and LAC policies, guidelines, and contractual documents. These include academic policies, finance and cancellation policies, health and safety policies, and student rights and responsibilities: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies).

### **FERPA**

Under Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and University policy, college students are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. As a result, the LAC does not share academic, personal, or financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without the student's written permission. As part of their application, all students designate two emergency contacts that will receive information only in the case of an emergency.

### **Official Communications**

Your UofM email address is the official means of communication. LAC messages will be sent to your UofM email address.

# Health, Wellness, & Safety

## Health

### Health Information Form

The purpose of the form is to help the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) to assist you in preparing for your time abroad. It is critical to disclose fully any health conditions or accommodation needs you may have on the LAC's Health Information Form. If your condition changes after completing this form or you realize you forgot to fully disclose anything, contact the LAC and provide the updated information as soon as possible.

Timely disclosure allows the LAC to support your overseas experience effectively. The information provided will remain confidential and will be shared with program staff, faculty, or appropriate professionals only as pertinent to your own well-being.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo).

### Mandatory Health & Safety Online Orientation

The mandatory Learning Abroad Center Health & Safety Online Orientation contains important information on health precautions, taking prescriptions overseas, and the mandatory insurance policy in which you will be enrolled as a program participant. Refer to your online acceptance checklist for the link to this orientation information and contact the LAC with questions.

### Health Insurance

#### US Health Insurance

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad.

The travel, health, and security insurance coverage through CISI is specifically exempt from the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and was not intended to and does not satisfy a person's obligation to secure minimum essential coverage beginning in 2014 under the ACA. The University encourages travelers to consult with their legal counsel or tax adviser for information on their obligations under the ACA.

For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the LAC's US insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement).

#### CISI Insurance

In addition to your US health insurance, the University of Minnesota has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services

International (CISI) to provide comprehensive international travel, health, and security insurance. This coverage is mandatory for all students and included in the program fee. You are covered by CISI only for the dates of the program and a few days to allow for travel to and from the US. If you plan to travel before or after your program, you should extend your CISI coverage or purchase your own insurance.

CISI does not include any preventive care, and individuals are advised to consult their medical providers for any checkups or preventive care prior to departure. Your CISI card and insurance policy will be emailed directly to you. Carry the card with you at all times. If you have any questions or need additional information about CISI, visit the LAC's insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).

### Medication Overseas

#### Prescriptions

Bring all necessary medication, for the entire term of your program, with you to your study abroad site and bring it in your *carry-on luggage only*. It is illegal to ship medication overseas and will be rejected at customs. Contact the LAC if you need an enrollment verification letter to submit to your insurance company requesting prescription medication for your entire stay abroad.

Consult with your LAC program contact if you would like to consult with CISI about obtaining any medication once abroad. Some medications, including those that are commonly available over the counter in the US, are controlled or banned substances abroad. The LAC, in consultation with CISI, will assist you in determining if you can travel with your medications or if alternative solutions must be explored.

### Vaccinations, Immunizations, & Travel Medicine

Medical facilities and health conditions in Ecuador are significantly less advanced than in the US. It is important that you inform yourself prior to departure what precautions to take while living in your Ecuador. Long before travel, consult with a health provider specializing in travel medicine; most general practitioners lack the requisite knowledge. Following consultation with a travel health specialist, you will need a number of immunizations. Ensure that these are recorded in your international immunization record, a yellow card that you should keep with your passport.

Quito has experienced doctors and medical facilities, and care may be quite satisfactory in some other major cities as well. Only rudimentary levels of care, at best, tend to be available in villages and small towns.

#### A Few Additional Tips

Avoid eating in restaurants with poor hygiene or buying food from street vendors. Assure yourself that food is well

cooked. Avoid uncooked fruits or vegetables unless you can peel them yourself.

Wash your hands frequently.

Tap water is not recommended. Drink boiled or bottled water (either carbonated or non-carbonated). Soft drinks are usually okay, but beware of juices that may be diluted with water.

Ice is as unsafe as water. Never add it to drinks unless it has been made from boiled or bottled water.

Take your own medications with you.

If you travel to high altitudes, avoid intense exercise until you have adapted. Drink lots of liquids and eat lots of carbohydrates. Monitor any symptoms of altitude sickness, which can include headaches and nausea.

It is strongly recommended students bring a water purification filter.

### **Malaria & Dengue Prevention**

Consult with your travel clinic regarding malaria and dengue risks and prevention.

Your travel health clinic will most likely recommend that you take a prophylactic (preventive) drug for malaria. It is essential that you purchase and take the medication as recommended by your healthcare provider. Depending on your insurance coverage, malaria medication may be very expensive but it is well worth its benefits. If you get malaria, you will become very ill very quickly, may need hospitalization, and may suffer lifelong consequences.

Students in the past have inquired about purchasing malaria preventive medication in their study abroad country. The LAC strongly advises against this approach for two reasons. First, in order to be protected, you must take the medication prior to your departure. Second, exposure to malaria-carrying mosquitoes could occur as soon as you arrive in country. While the medication cannot prevent you from contracting malaria, it significantly reduces the symptoms, allows you time to seek medical attention at a clinic in country, and facilitates a speedier recovery.

Speak with your US travel clinic about possible side effects and alternative anti-malarials if a change needs to be made overseas. Not all overseas physicians are aware of the different types of medications available, so inform yourself before you leave. Should you experience side effects once overseas, speak with the on-site staff and your US travel clinic about next steps.

Your travel clinic will also likely suggest that you purchase insect repellent with at least 21% DEET to help ward against malaria-carrying mosquitoes as well as those carrying other illnesses. *Ultrathon*, manufactured by 3M, contains 30% DEET and has been recommended by health professionals. You should use insect repellent during the day and especially at dusk and in the evenings. Mosquitoes carrying dengue fever are active in the day, and malaria-carrying mosquitoes are active at night.

There is currently no vaccine or medicine to prevent dengue. Travelers can protect themselves by preventing mosquito bites.

For more information, visit:

[wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/malaria](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/malaria) and

[wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/dengue](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/dengue).

### **Rabies Vaccination**

Consult with your travel clinic regarding rabies vaccination. The rabies vaccine is often recommended for travelers who may come into contact with wild or domestic animals. Keep in mind that it is not possible to initiate the vaccinations in the US and then complete them overseas. Dosage and type of vaccinations differ from country to country. For more information, visit: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/rabies](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/rabies).

### **Yellow Fever**

Travelers to certain parts of South America and Africa are at risk for yellow fever. Some countries require all travelers to show proof of yellow fever vaccination before they can enter the country. Other countries require proof of vaccination only if travelers have been in a risk area, so if you are visiting multiple countries, the order of travel may be important.

Proof of vaccination is not valid until 10 days after you get the vaccine, so plan to get the vaccine early if you need it. Not all travel clinics carry the yellow fever vaccination, so search for a yellow fever travel clinic at [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellow-fever-vaccination-clinics/search](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellow-fever-vaccination-clinics/search).

## **Wellness**

### **Wellness & Study Abroad**

In addition to any medications and required vaccinations, it is important to plan proactively for how you will maintain healthy habits abroad, both mentally and physically. Consider the following guidelines for your time abroad:

**Physical self-care:** Be physically active for 30–60 minutes daily, sleep enough to have energy through the day, spend at least an hour outdoors, and eat a balanced and moderate diet mostly of wholesome, minimally processed foods.

**Emotional self-care:** Talk to your medical provider prior to departure about effective ways to cope with the stress that can arise from experiencing unfamiliar surroundings and lack of family and friend support, as well as to identify new ways of centering and embracing change and new experiences. This is a valuable lifelong skill.

**Stress reduction practice:** Participate in at least one practice to quiet your mind and body. Examples include deep breathing, time in nature, prayer, journaling, sensory grounding, meditation, yoga, tai chi, qigong, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training, biofeedback, imagery work.

**Hydration:** Be certain to drink sufficient water and nutritious fluids as your body adjusts to a new climate and daily rhythm.

**Making adjustments:** Monitor your stress levels while abroad and adjust your daily routine (sleep patterns, exercise, food balance, hydration) to meet the needs of your new location.

**Positive attitude:** Try to keep perspective on the challenges that you may encounter and work toward your long-term study abroad goals.

**Support structures:** Identify who in country is available to provide support and guidance when you feel confused or challenged.

**Finding resilience:** Keep in mind that it is important to recover and grow from adversity and navigate difficult challenges with awareness, intention, and skill. Seek out healthy connections to others, focus on balanced self-care, keep an open, engaged mind, and work to address manageable challenges with patience and intention.

The following website provides additional suggestions:

[globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp](http://globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp)

## Mental Health

Learning abroad can be both fulfilling and challenging for all students and may present some additional challenges for those with mental health conditions. Even if you have no history of a mental health condition, it is possible that the impact of cultural adjustment or being in a foreign environment can influence your well-being.

The Health Information Form requires you to disclose any past and current mental health issues, family history of mental health, indications of mental health concerns, and current prescription medicines. It is imperative for LAC staff to receive this information before you study abroad to best support you and provide reasonable accommodations.

Past or current treatment for psychiatric and mental health conditions does not preclude you from studying abroad. However, if a healthcare professional recommends no travel or travel under certain conditions that cannot be met at a certain study location, you may be encouraged to focus on your health first and postpone program participation until a later time.

The following steps for managing mental health are important, regardless of where you will be traveling:

- Meet with your mental health professional prior to departure to discuss learning abroad and its implications, your plan to manage your health while abroad, and access to alternative support networks.
- Discuss a realistic communication plan for your time abroad with your support networks (i.e., family and friends).

- Understand that ups and downs are normal during study abroad. Check in with yourself often and seek support if you are feeling more intense ups and downs than expected.
- Connect with an LAC staff member prior to departure to set up on-site care with a mental health care professional, if required.
- Plan to bring sufficient amounts of prescriptions with you for the entire duration of your program. Work with LAC staff to ensure you can safely bring all necessary prescriptions abroad.

## Resources for UofM Students

- Student Counseling Services ([counseling.umn.edu](http://counseling.umn.edu)) and Boynton Mental Health Clinic ([bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm](http://bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm)): Staff in both settings can inform you about treatment options and offer immediate crisis counseling if needed.
- Behavior Consultation Team (BCT) ([mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/behavioral-consultation.html](http://mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/behavioral-consultation.html)): If you are concerned about causing harm to yourself or others, call the University's BCT at 011.612.626.3030.

For additional resources, visit [mentalhealth.umn.edu](http://mentalhealth.umn.edu).

## Safety

### Travel & Safety Considerations

#### *State Department Travel website*

Consult the United States State Department Country Information sheets, travel advisories and travel warnings at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

#### *CDC Information*

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [cdc.gov/travel](http://cdc.gov/travel) and US Department of State [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) websites for travel and safety information.

### Program-Specific Safety Considerations

#### *Embassy STEP Registration*

The LAC will register you with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which makes your presence in ECUADOR known to the US Department of State. Once you are enrolled in this program, you will receive the travel updates and information directly as they are issued. Please carefully review these messages and contact the LAC or on-site staff with questions. For more information, visit: [step.state.gov/step](http://step.state.gov/step).

In addition, the local embassy can be a source of assistance and information in the case of an emergency. Each of our programs has information about the local embassy, and you might even have an embassy visitor at your orientation.

For more information, visit the Country Information sheet at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for the countries you will visit and study in.

In order to ensure that all official communication from the US Department of State is sent to the correct address while you are abroad, check your official contact information prior to departure. Visit [onestop.umn.edu](http://onestop.umn.edu) to verify that the information is correct. If your contact information changes, you must notify the LAC.

## Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault

The University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center take the risk of sexual harassment and assault very seriously. This topic will be covered in orientations in more depth, and LAC staff and our colleagues on site are trained and prepared to provide support to victim survivors.

Anyone who experiences sexual harassment or sexual assault while abroad must deal with the stress of this unwanted event in a place and culture that is unfamiliar. Being away from the support and comfort of home can exacerbate feelings of hurt, confusion, anger, and loss of control. This is normal.

Do not tolerate behavior that feels threatening or disrespectful by staff in country, faculty members, or homestay family members. When in any doubt, consult with someone with whom you feel comfortable.

Report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault to in-country or LAC staff so that we can help you understand your options and supports available. The Aurora Center is a fully confidential resource for all students on LAC programs, even if you don't normally attend the University of Minnesota.

For more information on resources, including the Aurora Center, visit: [global.umn.edu/travel/assault/index.html](http://global.umn.edu/travel/assault/index.html).

The University of Minnesota prohibits sexual harassment and retaliation. In compliance with Title IX, the LAC will work with the University's Title IX coordinator on any related inquiries and complaints. For more information, please contact the LAC or visit: [eoaa.umn.edu](http://eoaa.umn.edu).

## Alcohol & Drug Use

The University of Minnesota Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct for Education Abroad allow for responsible drinking if you are legally allowed to drink in your host country. Illegal, irresponsible drinking and/or misbehaving while drinking are violations of the University's policy.

The University of Minnesota has a no-tolerance approach to drug use while abroad. Students using drugs abroad may immediately be removed from the program at their own cost. You are subject to the laws of the host country while abroad, and penalties for foreigners using or possessing drugs abroad are often very strict.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs).

## Personal Safety

When traveling overseas, there are a number of precautions you should follow in order to travel safely. Consult the US State Department's resources and your orientation materials for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

For more information on women travelers: [travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/Women.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/Women.html)

For more information on students abroad: [travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html).

For more information on staying safe while abroad: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad).

## Emergency Procedures

All students are required to carry a cell phone for use in an emergency. On-site staff will contact you on your cell phone, and you will utilize your phone to contact on-site staff and/or emergency services. In a life-threatening emergency, please seek immediate emergency care; otherwise, please contact on-site staff for assistance and recommendations. On-site staff are trained and have resources available to respond to all types of emergencies including, but not limited to, civil disturbance, natural disaster, illness or injury, hospitalization, robbery or pickpocketing, sexual assault/harassment, hate crimes, and mental health.

The LAC will utilize on-site resources as well as insurance and security resources, including CISI. See more details above on insurance.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/emergency](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/emergency).



## Independent Travel

### Independent Travel Notification

You are encouraged to travel during official program break periods, over holidays, or after the program is completed. During the program, travel on the weekends should be limited to nearby locations to ensure that you are able to maintain good rest, health, and timely completion of all coursework. Students are not permitted to travel during the program dates, including on weekends or vacations, to countries currently under a US State Department Travel Warning. See [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for the most up-to-date list.

Consult with the on-site staff, well in advance of your planned travel, to understand if there are other locations, beyond the Travel Warning locations, that you are not permitted to visit within your host country or region. These limitations are put in place for your safety and security and apply within the program dates. If you choose to visit a Travel Warning or other banned location before or after your program, you do so at your own risk.

All LAC program participants must notify the on-site staff of any independent travel that leaves the program location overnight. The required independent travel form is provided in the appendix of this handbook. Some sites will collect this form and others will have a slightly different way of collecting the same information, so refer to your on-site orientation for more specifics.

### Travel Restrictions

#### During the Program

Students are not allowed to visit any country with a travel advisory of 3 or higher, as determined by the US Department of State. Please visit [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html) for up-to-date information about travel warning countries. If you have questions about travel restrictions, please contact your study abroad adviser.

### Driving and Renting Vehicles Abroad

It is against University and LAC policy to drive or rent motor vehicles (including motor scooters or motorcycles) while a participant on an LAC program. These limitations extend from the start date to the end date of your program and are put in place for your safety and security. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of injury and death of students abroad.

## Arrival Logistics

### Arriving at the Program Site

Consult the coordinated flight section in the beginning of this handbook for general information regarding arrival. Below you will find country-specific instructions.

Students traveling to Ecuador may arrive early. Students arriving early to Ecuador are responsible for their own arrival transportation and lodging and must contact the Learning Abroad Center (LAC) in advance to make arrangements to join the group at a specified time and place.

Upon arrival to the airport, you will go through customs. After clearing customs, you will be directed to pick up any checked luggage.

A person carrying a sign "Fundación Cimas-MSID" will wait for the group as you depart from the luggage area. This person will take the group to a hotel, where you will spend the first night. The hotel will provide you with breakfast, but students will have to pay for their other meals and any extras.

If you arrive prior to the group, or are not able to make contact with Cimas/CEDUCONT staff, the alternative procedure is as follows:

After you exit immigration and customs, you will enter a big hall. Directly across from you, there will be a set of booths for transportation (Aeroservicios bus, vans, and taxis).

Go to the Aeroservicios bus booth, purchase an \$8 ticket, and proceed to the bus stop (located at the north side of the terminal). The bus leaves every 30 minutes.

The bus is air-conditioned and has WiFi capability. It will take about one hour to reach the site of the old airport in Quito. Once you exit the bus terminal, you will need to take a taxi to the hotel.

Here is the hotel information you will need:

Hotel Savoy Inn  
Address: Yasuní N44-164 y Av. El Inca  
Web: [savoyinnquito.com/index.htm](http://savoyinnquito.com/index.htm)  
Phone: (593-2) 2460620 / 2467118

Please keep in mind that you will not be able to call home upon your arrival. Telephones may not be immediately available, you will be exhausted, and orientation will begin quickly. Let your friends and family know that it may take several days for them to hear from you, and you are likely to contact them via email. The on-site staff will notify the LAC if a student does not arrive, and we will call the student's emergency contact, as needed. Remind friends and family members not to contact the on-site staff directly. All contact should be through the LAC.

## Initial Arrival Housing

In Ecuador, you will stay as a group in a hotel the first night. This gives you some time to recover from the trip and to get to know other program participants. On the second day, your host family will come to your hotel or another gathering point (most likely Cimas) to pick you up and take you to your new home.

## Program Information

### Orientation in Country

The MSID in-country staff and faculty provide an orientation covering a wide variety of topics including the academic program and its courses; expectations of staff, faculty, and students; cultural differences; the homestays; health and safety; local transportation; communication systems; and other practical matters. It may also include a welcome reception or other social event, a tour of the city, and sometimes one or more additional field trips as well. Most of this orientation takes place during the first few days in Ecuador, but a few topics are deferred until students have had time to make the initial adjustment. An orientation and program schedule, as well as a handout for emergency needs, will be provided upon arrival.

Let friends and family know that it will be difficult to reach you during this orientation period. Reassure them that you will be in touch via email as frequently as possible

### Program Excursions

All program excursions are related to the concepts of development and will provide you with the opportunity to see how different Ecuadorian NGO's, some of which are MSID internship sites, engage in support activities for the community.

### In-Country Staff

At each MSID site an on-site director and a program coordinator work closely as a team to manage the program. There is also a team of support staff to assist your daily life adjustments. Both the on-site director and the program coordinator maintain frequent email communication with the MSID staff in Minnesota.

The staff also have personal lives and should be contacted in the evenings and on weekends only in case of an emergency.

#### On-Site Director

The MSID Ecuador program has two on-site directors: Dr. José Suárez and Dolores (Loli) López. Dr. Suárez is executive director of Fundación Cimas del Ecuador, a development-focused nonprofit organization in Quito.

Dr. Suárez received his MPH and Ph.D. degrees in public health from the University of Minnesota. A physician and epidemiologist with extensive community experience, he has authored research studies and books about health and environment in Ecuador, participated in many international and national committees, and served as a consultant to the Pan American Health Organization and Ecuador's Ministry of Health. In addition to his extensive experience working with North American students and academic programs—including MSID since 1989—Dr. Suárez has taught at the University of Washington, Evergreen State University, and the Medical School of the Universidad Central del Ecuador.

Ms. López, who is president of Fundación Cimas, has bachelors' degrees in anthropology from the Universidad Católica del Ecuador and from Evergreen State College in Washington, and a master's degree in Ecuadorian studies from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Quito and has a doctorate from the same university in Anthropology. She has conducted research on social and cultural population issues; gained practical experience in working in indigenous and peasant communities; and organized local, national, and international conferences. In recent years she has been deeply involved in the quest for local development alternatives based on community participation. She has long worked with US study abroad programs, including MSID since 1989.

### Facilities

The MSID Ecuador program is located at the Fundación Cimas del Ecuador (Cimas). Cimas draws program faculty from a variety of Ecuadorian institutions of higher education. The Cimas staff numbers around 15.

Cimas' facilities include several classrooms; two conference rooms; a small library emphasizing environment, health, society, economy, and politics in Ecuador and Latin America; study space; offices; and two utility rooms used for social events and staff lunches. There is also a quiet area for students to rest, and one bedroom which students can use when feeling sick.

Cimas has a limited number of computers available for student use. However, most students choose to bring their own laptop to Ecuador. Cimas' computers are for academic use only. Cimas has wireless internet access and also provides students with addresses and phone numbers of libraries in Quito. It can be helpful to bring along an inexpensive laptop to use for completing assignments, but keep in mind that laptops are easily stolen. Keep it well hidden when storing and traveling with it and never put these kinds of valuables in your checked luggage.

# Housing Considerations

## Housing Options

You will stay a host family while in Ecuador.

Life with an Ecuadorian family can be a wonderful adventure if both parties understand and adapt to cultural differences. The homestay is an important venue for practicing Spanish and for gaining insights into Ecuadorian culture. Cimas will outline your rights and responsibilities in the homestay. Remember that for the most part you are expected to adapt to the family, not the family to you. Cimas tells the families that overall your presence should not lead them to change their customs, operating rules, or food; however, Cimas does ask the families to accommodate the dietary needs of students who are vegetarians or who have food allergies.

Housing and meals are provided for break periods during the semester if you elect to remain with your host family. During the break between program terms, you are encouraged to explore your MSID country. Housing and meals can be provided for an extra fee, if needed.

## Notification of Placement

The LAC typically receives basic information about your first homestay family (name and address) approximately one week prior to the program start date, and we will send the information to your University of Minnesota email account. Last-minute changes occasionally occur.

Since you may not know much about your host family/families prior to departure, we encourage you to bring a range of generic gifts to give them. Past students have recommended coffee table books from your home town/state, a board game, t-shirts, calendars, magnets, keychains, and sweets such as jelly beans. The in-country MSID administrative staff will outline for you and the family your respective rights and responsibilities in the homestay. The family is told that for the most part your presence should not lead them to change their customs, operating rules, or food.

## Housing Concerns

If you have questions about your homestay experience, speak to the on-site staff. As in the US, it is not acceptable for you to be asked, for example, to assist with caring for a host family member on a daily basis, be exposed to drunken or rude behavior, or tolerate any sexual advances. Although it is extremely rare for a host family experience to involve any of these, speak to the on-site staff if you have any concerns. You are also encouraged to consult with the MSID staff if you are experiencing communication challenges or encountering cultural differences that are unfamiliar to you.

# Homestay Families

Homestays are an integral component of the MSID learning experience. All students live and share most meals with at least one family. Students with internships or research projects in the main city typically choose to remain with the same family throughout. Only in rare cases does MSID permit alternative housing arrangements (i.e., a smaller town or community where no adequate homestay is available and the student must stay in a school or a clinic), and living independently is not allowed.

Students take breakfast and the evening meal with their host families, and all three meals on weekends. Often distances preclude returning for the noon meal during the week. Although you generally will be expected to eat the same food as your family, MSID does ask the families to accommodate the dietary needs of students who have food allergies or are uncompromising vegetarians. Many students who are vegetarians in the US decide instead to relax their standards during their MSID experience in order to minimize the inconvenience to non-vegetarian host families.

Students report that the homestays are among the richest and most challenging dimensions of MSID. You will find that a tremendous amount of your language and cultural learning takes place while you are at home. Students constantly bring insights gained from their families into the academic program, and, similarly, the classroom learning helps provide tools for a successful homestay.

## The Placement Process

MSID places students with a variety of families in terms of family size, profession, ethnic background, etc. Not only do students speak in class about the differences among their families, but they also drop in on fellow MSIDers in their homes. Think of each visit as an important learning experience.

The stipend paid by the MSID program to the host families is only a token gesture of appreciation for the time and expense of hosting you. The money in no way covers the cost of hosting an MSID student nor compensates for the adjustment the family agrees to undertake in order to incorporate an MSID student into their family.

MSID prefers less luxury to more. Nonetheless, understand that it is usually impossible to place students with very poor families. Most poor families lack the space to take in an extra family member, and many also live in areas of the city that do not meet MSID's standards of safety.

## Tips for a Successful Homestay

The MSID in-country staff seek families eager to incorporate US students into their lives. Host families are generally warm and welcoming and will want their students to participate in social events with friends and extended family. When you are placed with a family, you will probably get more than the family itself. You will get a wide range of friends, not to mention information, coaching,

advice, and endless opportunities to practice your language skills. If you and the family are both willing to throw yourselves into making the experience a rich one, you are likely to look back on your homestay as a highlight of your time in MSID.

A successful homestay requires consideration and cultural sensitivity. At times your cross-cultural skills and insights will be stretched to the limit. The in-country MSID staff will supplement this with initial support and ongoing coaching to create a smooth linkage between students and their families. Staff are always available to assist and sort out cultural adjustment problems as they arise.

In Ecuador, the notion of private space and time is not as common as in the US. Spend plenty of time with your host family and do not seclude yourself in your room. This is often viewed as rude and may cause your host family to wonder if you are sick or unhappy.

You will find your homestay parents and siblings very concerned for your well-being. They will be good sources of information and advice about negotiating the transportation system, safety precautions, etc. At the same time, their concern might occasionally seem to border on over-protectiveness, especially if you are a woman. Understand that the family is not trying to control you but to fulfill its inescapable responsibilities for the welfare of its US daughter or son.

In most cases, your family will do your laundry. Since dryers are infrequent, have sufficient undergarments for the delay in receiving your items back. Keep in mind that you should rinse and clean any underwear that is soiled, as this is considered a very private matter.

Host families may not have internet access. Be aware the cost of electricity and internet use in homes can be very high. You may be asked by your host family to pay a fee for your internet use, and you should consult with the on-site staff about correct cultural protocol.

When you leave the house, it is important to let the family know where you expect to be and approximately what time you plan to return. Never stay overnight elsewhere without first notifying your family.

In case of minor illnesses, your family will help you seek medical attention. In the case of more serious problems, you and your family are expected to notify the MSID administrative staff immediately in order to coordinate the best possible treatment.

Most families are conservative about relations between men and women. You are not allowed to have overnight guests of the opposite sex or to receive visitors in a closed bedroom.

Be judicious in your use of alcohol. Your host family and work colleagues will disapprove of substance abuse, and drunkenness could irreparably damage your relations with people who are important to you.

It is important not to abuse hospitality. Remember to ask the family for permission to bring friends, and be ready to cover extra expenses when inviting them.

Keep your room neat and tidy and be respectful of the common spaces in the house. Since you are a guest in the home, your bedroom should be kept in a manner that shows your respect and appreciation. In most countries, the notion of personal and private space does not exist in the same manner as in the US, and your room in your host family is not the same as having your own room in the US. Do not leave your clothes strewn on the floor or leave personal belongings around the house. Do not put your shoes on furniture, including your own bed. Unfortunately, US students are often viewed as messy and disrespectful. Do your part to correct this image. Keep in mind that personal hygiene is also very important. You are a guest in their home and should present yourself with respect and cleanliness.

Before you leave for Ecuador, it may be difficult to imagine the depth of the bonds that can develop between you and your host family. There is a special magic to friendships that cross deep cultural boundaries, and you may find the relationship with your family to be quite unlike other relationships you have experienced.

Farewells at the airport are often tear-filled on both sides. As your life becomes filled with the US hectic pace following your return, however, it can be all too easy not to take the time to keep in touch. An occasional letter, postcard, or email from you means a great deal to a family for whom you are as unforgettable as they are for you. MSID asks you to take a few moments to write from time to time. Keep in mind, however, that host families should not be expected to host you after your MSID experience or on future visits you may make to Ecuador.

## **Liability Insurance**

Regardless of your housing arrangement, you should consider your insurance coverage and needs. Does your renter's or homeowner's insurance cover your items if they are lost or stolen abroad? You may also wish to buy additional insurance in case you accidentally damage your accommodations, since any damages will be yours to pay.

For more information, visit: [global.umn.edu/travel/insurance/outgoing.html#personal-tab](http://global.umn.edu/travel/insurance/outgoing.html#personal-tab).

# Visitors

## Program Housing

Students' personal guests (e.g. friends, family, etc.) are not allowed to stay overnight in program housing, including apartments, dorms, and homestays.

## During Program Period

Visits during internship/research phases are also not permitted. Students who miss classes or days at their internship/research location due to travel will be dismissed from the program and forfeit both the program fee and all academic credit.

# Academics

## Policies

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the academic policies for study abroad as published on the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC)'s website: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies).

## Overview of Program Courses

### August or Winter Break Session

Students can choose to participate in the August or winter break language session for an additional fee. This program grants 4 language credits and runs for three and a half weeks in August or late December to mid-January. Students live with host families and participate in excursions.

Two levels of Spanish are offered during this term:

- ECDR 1004: *Intermediate Spanish II*
- ECDR 3015W: *Spanish Composition and Communication*

A full description of the available courses can be found at [UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/ecuador/academics](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/ecuador/academics).

### Semester Program

#### Courses Offered

MSID students enroll in 4–5 courses and earn 16–17 credits per semester. Complete course descriptions and syllabi are available online at [UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/msid-ecuador/academics/full-course-list](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/msid-ecuador/academics/full-course-list).

Students enroll in the following:

1. **ECDR 4101:** *Historical & Political Context of Ecuador*
2. One Spanish language course, depending on proficiency:
  - **ECDR 3011W:** *Spanish Grammar & Writing Workshop* (prerequisite: four semesters of college Spanish or equivalent)
  - **ECDR 3030W:** *Introduction to Latin American Cultures* (prerequisite: five+ semesters of college Spanish, including an advanced composition and communication course, or equivalent, or native-speaker status)
3. One international development course, meant to prepare students for their internship or research project:
  - **ECDR 4001:** *International Development: Human Rights, Policy & Practice*
  - **ECDR 4002:** *International Development: Social Entrepreneurship & Microfinance*
  - **ECDR 4003:** *International Development: Public Health & Traditional Andean Medicine*
  - **ECDR 4004:** *International Development: Environmental Challenges from the Andes to the Amazon*
4. One experiential learning course:
  - **ECDR 4896:** *Internships in Ecuador*
  - **ECDR 4201:** *Research in Ecuador*
5. (Optional) **OLPD 3330:** *Global Identity, Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future*, 1 credit



## Semester Schedule

The semester program consists of the following phases:

### Orientation (1 week)

### In-country Classroom Work (7 weeks)

You will spend an average of 25 hours per week in the classroom, plus time outside doing readings and assignments. The classroom time for the semester is front-loaded during this phase of the semester, since you're completing the majority of your coursework for 12 credits during a seven-week period. You'll also engage in academic excursions and consult with MSID staff and faculty throughout this period to define the subsequent internship or research project.

### Internship/Research Project (6 weeks)

Once the classroom phase concludes, students move to their individual placements with development agencies/projects in scattered locations, some urban and some in smaller towns and communities. Unless you are interested in a specifically urban topic, MSID encourages you to consider a placement in a smaller town so that you can have a contrasting experience and gain a more holistic view of the country.

**Activities.** The internships/research projects are the most important hallmark distinguishing MSID from most study abroad programs. In addition to contributing to their agency/project/community, students do written assignments connected to themes and concepts from the various courses.

**Support.** The MSID on-site director or another member of the program faculty visits each student at the internship site once during this phase. In addition to any trouble-shooting regarding the internship, these visits serve as occasions for you to hand in coursework and reflect on what you are learning.

**Academic role of the internship/research project in the semester programs.** In addition to academic work for the internship/research course itself, during this phase students also complete written assignments for the other courses. Each course thus becomes a different lens through which you interpret your experiences in your agency/project and your community. You might think of the internship or research project as a sort of lab section for the courses. Course descriptions are available on the LAC's website.

### Final Seminar (1 week)

The concluding week of the semester program brings students back together, whether in Quito or in a retreat setting, to analyze their internships or research projects. In final sessions of the various classes, each instructor helps students tie their experiences systematically to themes and concepts from the particular course. Any final exams are also given at this time. The week concludes with an integrating seminar at which the program staff help students reflect more holistically upon their MSID experience.

## Writing for MSID

MSID writing assignments can range from traditional to highly experiential, from individual to team-based. MSID requires approximately five focus papers per course and a longer end-of-term paper.

### Focus Papers

Focus papers are less formal than traditional term papers, and they generally ask you to draw on both your formal coursework and your experiences as you consider an issue. A typical focus paper might be three to five pages in length. Focus papers are assigned within individual courses (their number and due dates are specified in course syllabi).

You might find it useful to think of a focus paper as a sort of take-home essay exam designed to help you structure your thinking about the relation between your in-country experiences and course themes. Topics will vary from course to course, from country to country, and from year to year.

Focus papers have two parts which faculty may combine into one paper or ask students to submit as two different papers:

- **Field Observation:** an analytical account of something you have seen, heard, read, or experienced. Your analysis reflects on aspects of development and how it is manifested in Ecuador.
- **Personal Observation:** a written record, grounded in experience, of your own journey. It can contain description, exploration of issues, reflection, the posing of questions, personal perspectives, and analysis of your thoughts, feelings, and observations. The focus is on the ways in which a particular aspect of development impacts you personally and your values.

The focus papers are essential vehicles for you to record the learning that is taking place throughout your MSID experience. MSID faculty have high expectations for these reports. As you write, ask yourself whether you are demonstrating not only what you have experienced but also what you have learned.

### Format

Each focus paper must include at the beginning:

- Your name
- A title
- A date
- Course name

### Evaluation

In evaluating the focus papers, the faculty member will assess the extent to which you have met the following general criteria:

- Relevance to MSID curriculum. Is the topic related to the content of the course?

- Quality of description. Does your entry include a detailed description of the particular event or topic that you plan to analyze? Have you been able to avoid interpretation disguised as description?
- Quality of analysis. Does your entry reveal that you have thought in some depth about the subject? Do you develop one or more hypotheses to explain what you have written about? Do you criticize your own hypotheses?
- Use of theory-experience dialogue. How well does your entry relate what you have experienced or observed to bodies of academic knowledge that have been introduced through lectures, assigned readings, etc.? Do you attempt to understand what you have observed by holding theories and concepts when relevant? And/or do you use your observations to support or challenge theories and concepts?
- Evidence of growth. Do your entries show a growth in your understanding over time, whether of the host culture, of development, or of yourself? Is the quality of your description and the depth of your analysis improving?
- Quality of writing. Is the entry clearly written? Well organized? Free of spelling and grammatical errors?

As you write, try to imagine someone grading your reports and deciding, partly on the basis of what you have written, that you deserve University of Minnesota credit. If that exercise makes you feel uneasy, maybe you need to thicken your description, sharpen your analysis, read more, and/or tie your experiences more systematically to formal bodies of knowledge and theory.

## Language of Instruction

All courses on the MSID-Ecuador program are taught in Spanish. Likewise, all homework assignments, readings and papers will be in Spanish.

## Global Identity

*Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future*

This optional, one-credit course will provide opportunities for you to “make meaning” of your learning abroad experience and prepare you to communicate your intercultural competence to future employers, graduate schools, or law schools. As global connectivity becomes increasingly important, you are asked to think beyond the borders of your own perception and better understand the world based on the new ideas and experiences to which you are exposed. Your ability to work in a multicultural

setting and succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course will help you apply these skills to your post-graduation plans.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity).

## Internships & Research Projects

MSID internships and research projects are grassroots experiences with local non-profit agencies. MSID does not organize internships with banks, embassies, for-profit organizations, or large political agencies.

### **Internship Versus Research**

Internships focus on applied learning complemented by a thematic paper that reflects on the student’s experience. Activities might include: teaching English to school children, shadowing a health professional in a clinic, assisting with a reforestation project, shadowing reports and assisting with newspaper articles for a local non-profit news agency, organizing activities at an urban youth center.

Research projects focus on a larger theoretical topic that is relevant to development in the MSID country. Sample topics include: the structure and educational goals of primary education, the realization of public health care services, organic farming and its role in the local economy, government, and private funding resources for homeless children. Students who engage in a research project will typically not participate in applied, hands-on activities. The goal is to conduct research under the supervision of the host NGO agency on a larger theoretical topic.

### **Semester Program**

For those students who enroll for a semester, the shorter internship or research period provides a meaningful opportunity to begin to understand the many aspects of the term “development.” The six-week experience entails service to the agency, and job responsibilities are usually less ambitious. The experience will also afford a powerful venue for participant observation related to MSID course themes.

### **Internship or Research Placement**

As part of your acceptance process, you need to submit an Academic Information Form to the LAC. This form permits you to identify a sector in which you wish to be involved (e.g., health, environment, education), to specify, as well as you can, what sort of project you would like to have within that sector, and to indicate whether you are interested in remaining in Quito or being placed in a smaller town or community. Not all types of placements are feasible; for example, health-related internships or research projects in some countries cannot be in clinical settings.

MSID will forward all of the completed forms to the in-country staff, who will begin exploring potential placements

even before you arrive. Upon arrival you will further discuss your placement ideas with the in-country staff. The in-country staff will make contact with one or more organizations working in the field you identified and will inquire about their interest in hosting an MSID participant. Once a tentative placement has been identified, you will have an opportunity to discuss it before it is finalized. Most requests for placement within a general field can be accommodated, but in country issues may sometimes require adjustments. Particularly if you request a project related to sensitive populations, your project may be very limited or not possible.

### **Characteristics of MSID Internships/Research Projects**

- Related to development
- Grassroots, immersing the participant, directly and personally, in the social realities of the poorer strata of the population
- Designed to serve the goals of both the student and the agency
- Guided by objectives agreed to by the participant, supervisor, and in-country director
- Generally involve about 25 hours per week of work

### **Placement Categories**

MSID projects fall into the following categories:

- Environmental Challenges from the Andes to the Amazon
- Human Rights: Policy & Practice
- Public Health & Traditional Andean Medicine
- Social Entrepreneurship & Microfinance

Visit [UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/msid-ecuador/academics/internships](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/msid-ecuador/academics/internships) for examples of past placements for the MSID-Ecuador program.

### **The Importance of Initiative and Imagination**

Past students and in-country staff have repeatedly stressed the importance of student initiative in developing successful placements. Yes, it is true that some students receive a detailed job description from their agency when they arrive at their site, but that is the exception rather than the rule. You are just as likely to be given only a general idea of what to do. If you wait for someone to tell you exactly what you need to do and when you need to do it, you will be disappointed. When you get to your site, observe, think critically, try out ideas on your host-country colleagues, and use your imagination.

### **Location**

Internships and research projects in all countries are restricted to certain geographical regions. It is essential that your project be in a location that is safe and accessible. Keep in mind MSID encourages you to consider internship placements outside of the program city in order to offer you the possibility of a comparative experience.

### **Alternative Schedule**

You must discuss with your site supervisor any alteration to your schedule due to illness or travel for medical care or other necessary meetings. You or your site supervisor must also notify the MSID on-site director or coordinator if your schedule changes significantly. You may not adjust your weekly schedule for personal vacation travel, however.

### **Changing an Internship or Research Project**

MSID on-site staff will do their best to help you and your site supervisor make your placement successful. Commitments are made on your behalf before you start your project, and they should be honored to the fullest extent possible. Difficulties with an internship or research project should be discussed with the site supervisor and the MSID director. Changes in placement should be a last resort. Adjustments are ultimately the decision of the resident director.

Any participant who abandons an internship or research project without prior notification and approval of the on-site director will automatically receive a failing grade for all related coursework and may be removed from the program.

### **Extending Internships/Research Projects**

Occasionally an agency and a student would like to continue an internship or research project beyond the end of the program. Your ability to do so depends on the enrollment option you have chosen.

Fall semester students. You may not extend your internship beyond the end of December.

Spring semester students. If you complete the full program and you and the agency agree for you to stay on, you are free to do so. Typically students continue to work during such extensions on a volunteer basis. Take into account visa and health insurance issues.

Within these guidelines, any arrangement to extend an internship or research project is entirely between the student and the agency. After your particular enrollment option finishes, you are no longer an MSID student. Neither the LAC nor MSID's in-country staff is a party to such arrangements, nor does either bear any responsibility for your welfare as you continue your work.

### **Guidelines for Health-Related Projects**

Keep in mind the limits of your expertise. The need is great, and you must be careful to limit yourself to the areas in which you truly are knowledgeable, regardless of what people ask of you at your site.

You should decline to engage in any activity for which you are not personally trained. This includes such as activities as delivering babies, giving injections, drawing blood, and surgery. If you are asked to engage in these kinds of activities, decline and seek assistance. It is much more dangerous to assist in these areas than to wait and find someone who is trained to do these activities.

You should not be asked to engage in activities that involve contact with bodily fluids, wound cleaning, or invasive procedures. Since you cannot know for certain what illnesses the patient may have, it is important to observe these activities and not participate. You can learn a great deal from observation, and you should protect your health. Be certain to take universal precautions, including using face masks, eye shields, and non-latex gloves. As these items may be in short supply in Ecuador, you should bring these items with you.

HIV and HBV transmission can occur when someone is exposed through an open wound, mucous membrane or punctured skin to infected blood or bodily fluids that are contaminated with infected blood. These bodily fluids include amniotic fluid, pericardial fluid, semen, and vaginal secretions. HIV and HBV transmission has not been documented to occur from exposure to bodily fluids such as feces, nasal secretions, sputum, sweat, tears, urine, or vomit. Saliva is only a risk factor in dental settings where saliva is likely to be contaminated with blood.

**Vaccinations:** It is important to meet with a travel nurse or physician to discuss the vaccinations you will need for Ecuador. If your project might involve participation in tasks or activities with exposure to blood or other bodily fluids, you should be vaccinated with hepatitis B vaccine, and you should discuss this with your health care provider.

While meeting with your travel doctor or nurse, discuss bringing along an anti-retroviral. If you decide not to take one, identify a place in the country where a reliable anti-retroviral can be purchased in the event of exposure.

MSID students in health care or HIV-related settings should use surgical gloves when handling patients if there is likely contact with bodily fluids or when handling items or surfaces soiled with blood or bodily fluids. You should bring a box of surgical gloves with you.

You should wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. Wash the front and back of your hands and in between your fingers with plenty of soap and water (or waterless hand cleaner) for several minutes. Particularly after exposure to any bodily fluids from another person, it is important to wash your hands thoroughly. You should also wash your hands immediately after removing surgical gloves. This not only helps protect you; it reduces the spread of illnesses from hand-to-hand contact.

You should take precautions to prevent injuries to yourself through needles, scalpels, or other sharp devices. In orphanages, you should not be asked to change diapers or clean vomit or other bodily fluids, regardless of whether the children are infected or not. Keep in mind, however, that you can be exposed to bodily fluids just in the daily contact with children. Bring along an extra set of clean clothes or at least a clean shirt to your internship site. Also keep a log of any injuries or exposures, in case medical follow-up is needed at a later time.

### ***Designing Your Research Project***

Students wishing to use their research toward their major, including as a senior project, should consult their major adviser on the home campus. See the discussion on Using Credit for Specific Purposes, in the section on the Academic Program.

When planning a research project, keep in mind that you will be engaging in the on-going research activities of the NGO where you will be placed. While students can often conduct additional independent research on theoretical topics that complement the agency's activities, the project must be within the scope and oversight of the NGO and must be approved by the MSID resident director.

We encourage students to wait until they are in the MSID country and have a chance through the coursework and daily living to become sensitive to the local culture and understand some of the unique and challenging cultural perspectives before they try to formulate a research project.

### ***Human Subjects Research and Institutional Review Board (IRB)***

Students cannot start any human subjects research without IRB approval in advance, and most MSID research projects, including interviewing experts in country, can be achieved without needing IRB approval.

If the research focuses on products, methods, policies, procedures, organizations, etc. and not on people themselves, then students can collect data from individuals with expertise in this area, and it is not considered research with human subjects and thus does not need IRB approval.

Please contact the LAC MSID program staff if you have questions prior to departure and be certain to consult the MSID resident director if you have questions while on your MSID program

### ***Choosing a Topic***

You will determine your topic in consultation with the academic director and, in some cases, another faculty member given responsibility for overseeing the project. With this project supervisor you will develop a research plan specifying the questions to be addressed, the background reading necessary, the methodology to be employed, and the outcome to be developed.

Some students choose their topic before leaving their campus; others wait until they are in country and can ground their choice in better knowledge of local conditions. As long as you remain flexible, there are big advantages to thinking through your topic while you are still in the US; it permits you to consult with faculty on your campus and to use library and computer resources that may be difficult to match in country.

Regardless of whether you decide on a topic before or after arrival in country, you should to begin asking yourself the following questions as early as possible:

- What degree requirements do I wish to meet with my project? Does it need to fit into a particular major or minor? Does it need to meet departmental guidelines for a senior thesis? Do I understand those guidelines clearly?
- Is my topic feasible in relation to the time constraints I face?
- Am I sure I am not asking questions that are too sensitive politically or culturally? Does my host country impose any legal constraints on research?
- Do I have the necessary linguistic and/or methodological skills to carry off my project?
- Does my project require specific local resources (e.g. libraries, interpreters, or a steady supply of electricity for my computer)? If so, am I sure those resources will be available to me?
- Can my topic command the necessary faculty support?
- Can I get assistance on my campus prior to departure?

### **Starting Your Academic Planning**

Once you have selected a topic, you need to begin shaping the project:

- Limit your topic to something manageable. Projects that are too large are difficult to complete.
- Think through your methodology carefully, and seek advice from faculty on your campus. What do you propose to do once you are on site? What will you be looking at? With whom will you want to speak? What research tools will you use?
- Try to identify in advance the vulnerable points in your research strategy. On what local resources or circumstances are you counting? Discuss contingency plans with faculty in case those resources prove unavailable or those circumstances nonexistent.
- Budget enough time for such post-fieldwork activities as data analysis and further library research, not to mention the writing itself.

### **Additional Resources**

The Learning Abroad Center has a dedicated page for study abroad research at: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/undergraduate-research-abroad](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/undergraduate-research-abroad).

## **Registration**

### **Registration through the UofM**

#### **University of Minnesota Twin Cities Students**

Before registering, you should meet with your academic adviser(s) to discuss the courses you plan to take and complete the Academic Planning form. All University of Minnesota Twin Cities students will be responsible for registering themselves using the University of Minnesota online registration system. Prior to departure, you will receive an email with all the necessary information for

registration. Do not look for your class number to appear on the class schedule on the MyU website. The numbers required for registration can only be obtained from the LAC. If you register for a course that is listed online, you have registered for the wrong course and may be subject to tuition charges. Complete your registration by the stated deadline in the registration instruction email from the LAC. Check online for holds or required registration approvals that would prevent you from registering for classes and clear them before the registration deadline. The LAC cannot remove holds on student accounts. Failure to complete registration may result in late registration fees and may delay or prevent financial aid disbursement. If you do not register for study abroad, your grades cannot be processed. Failure to register before departing for study abroad may result in no credit for your study abroad program.

### **UMN System Students**

Students from the University of Minnesota—Morris, Crookston, Rochester, or Duluth will be set up as a multi-U student by their home campus. Please contact your study abroad office to verify that your multi-U status has been set up. You can then register as a UMTC student (see above).

### **Non-University of Minnesota Students**

Students from other institutions will be registered by the LAC and do not need to register themselves through the MyU website.

### **Maintaining Full-Time Status**

Students are required to maintain full-time registration status as defined by their individual program throughout the duration of their study abroad program. Dropping or withdrawing from a class will not be allowed if it will bring a student below the required full-time enrollment.

### **Post-Program Registration**

While abroad, University of Minnesota students and most other students will need to register for classes for the following term on their home campus. You must make any necessary arrangements prior to departure so that you are able to register while overseas. In many cases, students are able to register online.

### **Grades & Credit**

All courses must be taken for A/F credit. MSID does not permit S/N (pass/fail) registration. The University of Minnesota's A/F grading scale includes grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and F.

### **Hours of Student Effort**

University of Minnesota policy specifies that each semester credit should reflect approximately 12.5 instructional contact hours of 60 minutes and twice that amount for out-of-classroom assignments. The policy also notes that certain kinds of courses with a strong experiential component—including field seminars, internships, and



research projects—may involve fewer classroom contact hours than this and greater out-of-classroom hours.

**Semester programs:** MSID courses conform to these standards, which means that each 4-credit course has 50 instructional contact hours, including didactic instruction during field trips. Out-of-classroom hours of student effort are achieved through reading assignments, focus paper assignments, group work, excursions, and cultural contact with host families and program-sponsored activities. Semester program internships have a minimum of 150 contact hours.

### Using Credit for Specific Purposes

Regardless of whether or not you are a University of Minnesota student, obtaining credit is one thing and getting that credit accepted toward an academic major or minor is another.

Many students wish to use one or more of their MSID courses for such purposes. Students are often able to negotiate one or more of these courses toward an appropriate major on the home campus. This will likely require documentation—one of the reasons it is so important to hold onto syllabi, graded assignments, and so on.

If you hope to apply an internship or research project toward your major or minor, it is essential that you consult with appropriate advisers and faculty before going overseas. Use the course descriptions on the LAC's website in the discussion with your adviser or faculty. Ask your adviser for written guidelines if they exist. A faculty member in your department may wish to review the final product before deciding whether it can count toward your major or minor.

University of Minnesota students should note that MSID fulfills two Liberal Education requirements for graduation: the Global Perspectives theme and the Civic Life and Ethics theme.

## Course Drop/Add/Withdrawal

### Course Changes

Since MSID courses are all mandatory, the only change allowed is for a student to switch between pursuing an internship and pursuing a research project.

## Academic Culture

### Academic Rigor

The program is designed to be academically rigorous, and it is each student's responsibility to maintain good study habits and complete assignments on time.

Students will need to learn to function simultaneously in two cultural contexts. Local time as experienced in the village or the family may be more fluid and informal than "MSID time." It is important to learn to flow with local time; it is equally important to retain enough structure and self-discipline in the academic part of life to avoid getting behind on assignments. Students who fail to attend class or who miss internship or research hours without prior permission from the on-site director will be dismissed from the program.

### Books & Materials

Upon arrival, students will be required to purchase a packet that contains the readings and materials for all classes. The cost is approximately \$40 USD.

We encourage you to bring a few school supplies with you. However, you can also purchase these inexpensively in Quito.

Pre-session students will also purchase a course pack with all readings and materials for their language course upon arrival in Quito.

### Incompletes

MSID does not grant incompletes or allow students to opt out of a particular course. All coursework, including the directed research projects, must be handed in by the end of the program. Rare exceptions can be requested in cases such as serious health problems or family emergencies.

These exceptions must be approved in advance by the on-site director.

## Grade Appeals

If you wish to question a grade issued for a particular course after the program is completed, you must provide evidence that the professor made an error in his/her grade calculation. The following are **not** reasonable grounds for grade appeal:

- Differences between US and host country educational systems
- Personal disappointment in the grade outcome
- Comparison with one's own prior academic record/GPA
- Failure to complete one or more assignments
- Minimum grade requirement of college/department or home university
- Health concerns/missed classes

Consult with your program contact in the LAC if you believe an error has occurred and you wish to complete the Grade Petition Form.

## Student Grievances

Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center or affiliated programs offered through the LAC, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the LAC, the assistant dean for Learning Abroad, the Student Conflict Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

# Living in the Host Country

## Introduction to Ecuador

Ecuador is one of 18 Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. The linguistic, cultural, and institutional heritage of centuries of Spanish rule gives these countries much in common. Yet each is highly distinct. Comparing economic and demographic indicators, Ecuador appears to be more “developed” than most of the Third World, but less than most of Latin America.

### Economy

The economic cycles of the twentieth century were associated mainly with three products. The cacao boom began in the latter part of the nineteenth century and

lasted until approximately 1925. Its bust cycle was associated with heightened political instability until the banana boom began in the 1940s. Although bananas were in decline by the 1960s, in the early 1970s the vast oil fields of the Oriente came into production. Ecuador joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and rode the high prices of the 1970s to a previously unknown level of prosperity. Then prices declined in the 1980s and the bottom fell out of the boom.

Although petroleum is still the dominant product, it declined as a proportion of exports in the 1990s in favor of fish, shrimp, and traditional agricultural exports. Tourism has risen to become the third-largest source of foreign exchange.

Like many petroleum-producing countries, in the euphoria of the 1970s Ecuador borrowed heavily against future oil revenues. When prices declined, it found itself saddled with a crushing debt. Whereas some Latin American countries have overcome the worst of the region-wide debt crisis of the 1980s, Ecuador's economy still has not recovered. The growth rate is slower than in much of the region, and so far no new product comparable to bananas or petroleum has appeared on the scene as a savior.

Since the early 1990s Ecuador has been in a period of what Latin Americans call *neoliberalismo*, a shorthand term for a collection of policies which generally include free trade, relatively unfettered foreign capital penetration, a reduction in government regulation of the economy, and privatization of selected enterprises formerly in the hands of the government. Under pressure from multinational corporations, international lending agencies, and Western governments, one Latin American country after another has embraced neoliberalism. Ecuador has done so more slowly than Chile or Argentina, but it is clearly moving in the same direction, especially in response to conditions set by the International Monetary Fund. The dollarization of the economy in early 2000 represented a new extreme in the move to neoliberal economic policies.

### People

Ethnically there is no question that Ecuador is a central Andean country, along with Peru and Bolivia. These three collective heirs to the Inca Empire still have some of the largest indigenous populations in the Americas. Indian is considered a pejorative term in Ecuador; it is better to say *indígenas* than *indios*. Although a smaller proportion of the population speaks indigenous languages than in its two neighbors to the south, Ecuador contrasts starkly with the northern Andean countries of Colombia and Venezuela, which have very small indigenous populations. Ecuador clearly belongs to what some observers have called Indo-America, along with Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, and parts of southern Mexico. Policy toward the indigenous peoples in these countries has been a central bone of contention, and approaches have tended to reel between assimilation, cultural reinforcement, and naked exploitation. In recent years Ecuador has become a hemispheric leader in terms

of indigenous political activism. Ecuador also has a vibrant Afro-Ecuadorian community.

## Climate & What to Wear

Pack for warm and cold conditions. Even if your internship/research project turns out to be in the mountains, you will probably do some traveling to the lowlands, so you will need some clothing for hot weather as well as cool. Mountain passes can be very chilly. Some of the highland basins are high enough that your hands and feet may always seem cold in the unheated houses. Sweaters are often necessary in Quito, especially at night. Scarves, gloves, hats, and sweaters are produced in Ecuador and can be inexpensively purchased at local markets.

Ecuador's climate is greatly varied in terms of both temperature and precipitation. The different environments support everything from desert to rainforest to permanent ice and snow.

Being on the equator—hence its name—Ecuador experiences only tiny seasonal variations in temperature. The difference in average temperatures between the warmest and coldest months is less than 5° F in Guayaquil and only 0.4° F in Quito. Ecuador experiences little of the day-to-day temperature variations that characterize mid-latitude climates. Although average temperatures in Ecuador can be higher than in Minnesota, the hottest days in Minnesota are actually warmer than the hottest in Ecuador. Because one day in the tropics is nearly the same as the next, Ecuador neither experiences the cold fronts that bring relief after a heat wave nor sweltering hot days.

Temperatures do vary a great deal with altitude: They decrease by an average of nearly 3° F for each thousand feet of rise in elevation. The Costa and Oriente are hot, with average temperatures around 76–80° F (24–26°C)—higher than Minneapolis in July. In contrast, sweaters are often needed in Quito, at over 9,000 feet elevation, which has an average annual temperature (average of daytime highs and nighttime lows) of only 57° F (14°C). Like Quito, most of the highland basins enjoy very pleasant climates. Higher up, however, the páramos (high-altitude grasslands) are always cold, and permanent snow begins at around 16,000 feet elevation. As elevation rises and the air thins, the daily range in temperature increases; thus the same location might enjoy shirtsleeve weather during the day, at least when the sun shines, while experiencing bitter cold at night.

Although temperature changes little with the calendar, rainfall is highly seasonal in all regions of the country. The contrasts between the rainy season and the dry season are especially dramatic in the Pacific lowlands. Guayaquil receives 38 of its 43 inches of rainfall between January and April, including 11 inches in March—versus no rain at all in July. The contrasts are only slightly less striking in the Sierra. Quito's rainfall ranges from seven inches in April to an inch in July. Precipitation is sufficient, and the dry season short

enough, to support rainforest in the Oriente, in the northern portion of the Costa, and in other zones of the Costa toward the base of the Andes. In general, precipitation tends to be higher in the north than the south; the contrasts are greatest on the coast, where the climates range from a tropical rainforest regime near the Colombian border to a desert regime by the time you reach the Peruvian border.

You will need an umbrella and good raincoat during your stay in Ecuador.

## Relationships

Given the significant cultural differences between the United States and Ecuador, MSID strongly encourages students to prioritize their academic experience and seek cultural experiences through their host family environment. What might be considered a casual drink or meal with a person of interest can have a much more significant meaning abroad, and extracting oneself from a misinterpreted encounter can be both emotionally painful and embarrassing. It is also important to remember that it is very difficult for you to determine safely who might be genuinely interested in you and who has ulterior motives (such as stealing your passport, money, or seeking a visa to the US).

### Dating Apps

Be cautious when considering online dating applications or other venues for meeting people. This is particularly important when seeking to meet new people because there are different cultural norms and values that surround relationships of all kinds. What might be considered a casual drink or meal with a person of interest can have a much more significant meaning in a different cultural context. Online dating applications can carry different connotations or serve different purposes than they do in the United States. It is important to remember that it is very difficult for you to safely determine who might be genuinely interested in you and who has ulterior motives (such as stealing your passport or money, or seeking a visa to the US). Given the significant cultural differences between the US and countries abroad, the LAC strongly encourages students to prioritize their academics and be mindful to seek out cultural experiences that are safe, such as through homestays, local staff, and program activities.

## Communication

Students communicate with their friends and family members in the US through various means. Students are required to purchase cell phones in country, which allows for unlimited incoming calls, including from the US, text messages, and local calls.

Let family and friends in the US know that you will not be able to contact them immediately upon your arrival in country. It will usually be several days before you have the time to make contact, and students frequently correspond

most easily by text and email. Video calling is also an easy way to keep in touch.

## Internet Access

You will have WiFi internet at Cimas, where classes are held each weekday during the classroom phase. In addition, most host families in Quito have internet access.

During the internship/research phase, you will have internet access at your placement site. However, your host family may or may not have internet access.

Keep in mind that internet access throughout Ecuador will not be as fast or reliable as you are accustomed to here in the US.

## Social Media

Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after you have returned to the United States.

## Phones

All host families in Ecuador have landline telephones, including the host families for internship/research project sites. However, you will rely on local cell phones for the majority of your communication.

The MSID Ecuador program requires all students to purchase and carry cell phones while on the program. This is not only a good safety precaution, it also facilitates communication between students and program staff.

Most students either purchase a local SIM card for their US cell phone while in Ecuador or purchase an inexpensive track phone to communicate with their host families, CIMAS, and other students while out of the house. Most students bring their US smartphones to communicate with their friends and family back home while using Wi-Fi.

For those who choose to purchase a local cell phone, the system in Ecuador is pay-as-you-go. You can add credit to your account from various kiosks around town. This credit can be applied toward local or international texts and calls. Incoming calls to cell phones in Ecuador are typically free, so we encourage you to have family and friends place the call.

Apps like Skype or WhatsApp also allow you to place free or inexpensive calls to international numbers over the internet.

## Mail

If family or friends would like to send you a letter or card during your time abroad, it's best to have them send it directly to Cimas instead of to your host family's house. Your address in Quito will be:

Your name (clearly spelled out)  
c/o Fundación Cimas del Ecuador  
Los Olivos E-15-18 y las Minas  
EC 170-149  
Quito, Ecuador

Keep in mind that postal mail in Ecuador can be slow and unreliable, so you should allow extra time for it to arrive. In addition, anything valuable and/or urgent should be sent via an international carrier such as DHL or FedEx, never through postal mail. In this case, the sender should not declare any commercial value for the goods; otherwise, you will have to pay customs taxes in Ecuador.

## Money Matters

Ecuador uses the US dollar as its official national currency. Ecuador uses the same paper currency as the US, but mints its own coins. However, both US coins and bills are accepted as forms of payment.

Being able to use the US dollar abroad means that you will not need to exchange currency in advance. It also makes it easy for you to understand how much you are spending for everyday items.

The cost of living in Quito is significantly less than here in Minneapolis, making Ecuador an affordable destination for students. For current cost-of-living information, visit: [expatistan.com/cost-of-living](http://expatistan.com/cost-of-living).

## Financial Planning

Despite the relatively low cost of living in Ecuador, you should still take some time to budget for your experience abroad. Since spending habits vary, it's difficult to predict exactly how much you may need. However, past students have commented that they spent anywhere from \$400 to \$1,500 or more during the semester.

Your main expenses throughout the semester will be lunches, daily living expenses, and the cost of any travel or shopping.

One good resource for financial planning is the Cost of Participation sheet posted under the Fees tab of the program website: [UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/msid-ecuador#tab=fees](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/americas/msid-ecuador#tab=fees). It lists both billed and estimated out-of-pocket costs for the program.

## Cash

Ecuador is primarily a cash economy, which means that although debit and credit cards are accepted in some locations, you'll make the overwhelming majority of your purchases in cash. This is true in Quito, but especially in smaller towns or cities in Ecuador.

We recommend bringing approximately \$125 in cash with you to Ecuador and relying on your ATM card to replenish your supply. Larger bills (anything over \$20) can be difficult to break, so be sure to bring small bills (\$1, \$5, and \$10) and coins.

Though you will need cash for everyday purchases, try to limit the amount that you carry with you on a regular basis to minimize the risk of theft.

## Debit/ATM Cards & Credit Cards

It's important to contact your debit and/or credit card company prior to departure to notify them that you will be traveling and make sure that your card is set up for use abroad. If you do not, they may assume your foreign transactions are fraudulent and may deny any transactions.

You will also want to discuss any fees associated with using your card(s) abroad. Many banks charge ATM/foreign transaction fees. It's important that you understand these fees.

Although you will not need a credit card on a regular basis, we recommend that you have access to a credit card in case of a medical emergency or unexpected expense.

It's a good idea to make a photocopy of your debit/credit card(s) so that you have the card info and bank contact info just in case of loss or theft.

## Using ATMs in Ecuador

ATMs are very easy to find throughout Quito and in small cities. Be sure to check with your bank about any fees associated with using ATMs abroad. Since most banks charge per withdrawal, students will often withdraw larger sums at once, but carry only small amounts of cash with them on a daily basis.

ATMs can be found on the street or inside banks and shopping centers. For safety reasons, we recommend using ATMs that are located inside, since they tend to be more secure.

## Packing

Packing is highly individual, and no single list will work for everyone. A packing list is provided at the end of this guide. The following considerations can help you pack wisely.

In general, the most important thing is to pack in layers and bring clothes that are versatile. Daytime temperatures can vary widely from 60–75° F and get down to about 50° F at night.

Remember that because Quito and many other surrounding cities are at a high altitude, the temperature may be cooler than you expect, and the weather can change frequently throughout the day. It's wise to always be prepared with an extra layer.

### Packing Principles

**Think about laundry.** Lighter colors help you stay cool, but darker colors show dirt less; you might wish to strike a happy medium if you expect to be in hot areas. Stress lightweight fabrics that can be easily hand-washed, can hold up to repeated washing, and do not need ironing.

You will be able to do laundry weekly at your host family's house. Focus on packing approximately 10 days' worth of clothing that you can mix/match and layer.

**Plan to be presentable.** People dress nicely every day in Ecuador, especially in the cities. Pack clothing that is relatively new, both to be sure it lasts through your time overseas and because you will feel uncomfortably out of place if you wear ripped, baggy, or faded clothes.

**Be conservative.** In general, Ecuadorians tend to dress more conservatively than here in the US. Some clothing that is common on a US campus could attract unwanted attention in Ecuador. If you wish to pack a running outfit, choose athletic pants or shorts that extend to the knee. It's very uncommon for locals to wear shorts, especially in Quito. Long pants are the norm, even when the weather is warm, so you should not plan on wearing shorts unless you are at the beach. If you wear tank tops, choose modest ones. Women in smaller towns tend to wear skirts for comfort.

**Try to anticipate your internship, research project, and other activities.** For example, if you think you will work partly in an office setting, you will dress more formally than if you want to work in a village. If you expect to work outdoors a lot, include boots and rugged clothing.

**Choose your luggage wisely.** Most students prefer backpacks to suitcases. Buy a high-quality backpack/daypack. Can your smaller backpack/suitcase nest inside a larger one? Will your carry-on double for weekend travel?

**Anticipate possible delays (or even losses) in checked baggage when packing your carry-on.** Pack in your carry-on anything that you would need during your first two or three days in country, including prescription drugs, as well as small items that are fragile, irreplaceable, or of significant monetary value. Do not take scissors, knives, etc., in your carry-on.

**Remember you can buy things in country.** You can purchase clothing and other items in country, although you will not have time to devote to shopping for new items, especially when you are at your internship site. If you have a strong brand preference, ask a returnee whether your brand is available in your country. Very tall students might find it hard to purchase clothes of the right size.

You will find many clothing items to be cheaper in Ecuador than in the US. However, other products, such as batteries, personal hygiene, feminine products, etc. are often more expensive in Ecuador and not always readily available.

**Don't take the kitchen sink.** The most consistent feedback from returned students is "I packed too much!" Be selective. No one will need all the things on the packing checklist in the appendix. Decide what, and how much, is really essential to you. Try to get by with one large backpack and a carry-on. Many savvy travelers recommend that you pack once, try walking around the block with all your stuff, and then begin eliminating things until you can do it comfortably.

## Electricity

In Ecuador, the supply of electricity tends to be erratic, with frequent blackouts and occasional power surges. You will need a good surge protector if you are taking a laptop

computer or any other sensitive items, and if you are using a computer you should save documents frequently.

Electricity is very expensive. Host families may want students to limit their use of electronic appliances in the home.

Ecuador uses 100-volt, 60-cycle electricity, same as the US. Plugs are typically the two-pronged flat type, so US travelers usually will not need a converter or an adapter in order to use their electronics abroad.

## Tips from Students

Past students compiled the following list of additional information:

- Quito is at a high altitude, over 9,000 feet. Take it easy when you first arrive in country.
- Ecuadorians are very polite people. Always greet people with a handshake (common between men) or a kiss on the cheek (common between women or between a man and a woman).
- If you need a cab at night, especially as a woman, call a cab company to your home (or wherever you are) rather than hail one on the street. This is the safest way. Also, if you must hail a cab at night, negotiate the price before accepting the ride, since the meters are turned off after dark and you could end up paying outrageous prices.
- “Ecuadorian” time is different than “American” time. Be patient and flexible. Do not expect people to be on time, or for events to occur when scheduled. It’s all part of integrating into the culture.
- Things are less methodical/routine than in the US. For example, the buses don’t run on a schedule, and you may be asked to pay as you board, once you sit down, or as you leave, depending on the specific bus. Once again, be flexible.
- Packages sent to Ecuador should not have a declared value. If they do, it is difficult and expensive to receive the package.

## Social & Cultural Adjustments

### Race & Identity

Race can influence students’ perspectives on their host country. Past participants of color tell us that the differences between their experiences and those of Euro-Americans can include both advantages and disadvantages. Students of color often learn a great deal about their identity as a US citizen through an experience in a foreign country, and they

sometimes find the new cultural context quite liberating. On the other hand, they occasionally encounter new forms of prejudice and discrimination. It is important that participants of all races avoid projecting American assumptions and attitudes about race onto the host culture. For example, definitions of racial categories, if they exist at all, may be very different from those in the US.

It is difficult to generalize about the overt and covert levels of racism that may or may not exist in any given culture, or to predict what a particular student’s personal experience will be. It can be said that any experience abroad will be a combination of circumstances, attitude, and coping skills. Some study abroad offices have put together resources for students of color who are preparing to study abroad. You should contact your own study abroad office or a member of the LAC MSID staff for additional information.

Students going to a location related to their ethnic heritage might wish to examine critically their expectations in advance. If part of your reason for enrolling in MSID is to explore your own identity, be careful not to romanticize what you might find. Students often discover that local people perceive them much more in terms of their American identity than their racial or ethnic background. You may gain rich insights into your roots, but do not expect members of the host society to treat you as a returning brother or sister.

### Gender

Gender roles tend to be more rigidly defined in Ecuador, especially in smaller towns, than they are today in the US. You may find that people respond quite differently to you depending on whether you are male or female. You may also observe a strongly gender-based division of labor in your homestay family or your agency. This sometimes challenges students’ cross-cultural understanding and skills. As in other areas, try to understand what is going on rather than to judge. It is all right to gently test the limits of gender roles—for example, if you are male to see what happens when you offer a couple of times to help with the dishes in your homestay, or if you are female to try to be more assertive than you observe among female colleagues in your agency—and be sensitive to the feedback you receive. Above all, resist any temptation to launch a one-person crusade to change things. For example, even if you feel that your homestay mother and sisters are “oppressed,” you will not be able to “liberate” them, and any attempt to do so could irreparably harm your relations with your family.

Many women experience “cat calls” and other forms of gender harassment while overseas. Be prepared in advance

for this possibility and consider the following coping strategies: look straight ahead and keep walking; walk with a purpose and do not appear to be wandering without aim, walk quickly and with confidence; say “no” or “no, thank you” with conviction; consider wearing local attire to help you blend in (shawls, head scarves, etc. can reduce the possibility of intruders catching your eye and attention); develop a tough skin and do not take the matter personally; avoid walking alone or at night.

Cultural norms concerning relations between men and women, including dating, vary considerably among developing countries, and even from one region to another or between rural and urban settings. This topic will be included in your in-country orientation. When in doubt concerning what behavior is acceptable, consult with a trusted MSID staff or faculty member.

### **Sexual Orientation**

Attitudes toward sexuality are very traditional. People are generally intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos and laws against such relationships exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible. Consult with the LAC staff for more information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues if you have any questions.

### **Disabilities**

Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting. Participants with any kind of disability, whether apparent or non-apparent, should contact the LAC early in the process to discuss their particular needs. Students should plan to submit their Accommodations Request Form at least eight weeks before the start of the program. For more information, and to download the form, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities).

### **Diversity among Program Participants**

Whatever your own sexual orientation, gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or physical ability, keep in mind that you will be part of a diverse group. Some differences will be obvious or made known to you, others will not. Sensitivity to diversity within your own group will further enrich your experience abroad. Some of your most powerful learning experiences may revolve around differences within your group. MSID participants also come from extremely varied academic backgrounds. Majors range from the social sciences or humanities to fields such as engineering, business, or agriculture. An economics or political science student who has taken considerable coursework on development may find that some aspects of the academic coursework are repetitious; on the other

hand, the field experiences in MSID offer a rich opportunity to explore the application of theory to practical settings. An engineering major may have little background in development or cross-cultural communication but may have practical skills and knowledge that make internship placements easier to find than for a liberal arts major. A student with limited course preparation relevant to MSID may bring a wealth of volunteer experience or social and political activism to the program. All students are strong in some dimensions and weak in others. Be prepared to share your strengths and to draw on those of your classmates.

## **Looking Ahead**

### **Career Relevance**

Learning abroad can help you develop and enhance intercultural competencies that are appealing to potential employers and graduate schools. Think about your academic and career goals before, during, and after your experience abroad. For more information, visit:

[UMabroad.umn.edu/students/career-rel](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/career-rel).

### **Re-Entry**

#### **The MSID Re-Entry Experience**

In the particular case of MSID, the following tend to be among the biggest issues:

**Poverty and affluence:** MSID students catch many glimpses of the meaning of real poverty. You will gain a new perspective on resource use as you observe the austerity of most people’s lives in your host country. Everything is used until it is worn out, then re-used by someone else who is still poorer. Your host family may discourage you from showering more than a minute or two per day in order to conserve water, or from reading late at night because of the energy that a light bulb consumes. Then, when you return home, you may experience a profound sense of resentment at over-consumption and waste in the US. People in the US may seem to have far too much, and their dissatisfaction about still not having enough may seem incomprehensible.

**US influence:** Living in another country, especially a poorer one, affords many opportunities to observe the economic, political, and cultural roles the US and its corporations play on the global stage. Especially when viewed from the perspective of the poor in your host country, those roles may seem less than constructive. Upon return to the US, you may feel resentful that such issues trouble your friends and family members so much less than you think they should.

**Ignorance and distortion:** You may find yourself intensely resentful of the US media. Coverage of the rest of the world, when it exists at all, may seem shallow and

ethnocentric, and the depths of American ignorance may appall you. Remember, though, that you were probably almost equally ignorant of your future host country a year ago.

**Social justice:** The inequalities of your host society probably hit you daily throughout your MSID experience. Upon return you will likely be more attuned to see the inequalities in our own society. You will find yourself asking why so rich a country should have the most inequitable distribution of income and wealth anywhere in the industrialized world, and you may find it strange that others here can be so oblivious to injustice.

**Values and pace:** The MSID experience leads many students to reexamine their own values and lifestyle. Although the slow pace of life in your host society may have been frustrating initially, you finally did learn how to just “be,” rather than always needing to “do.” Now the hectic pace of US life may well feel disconcerting, even offensive. US society may seem obsessed with productivity, leaving little time for cultivating the human relationships you have found central to your host culture.

MSID is likely to prove to be one of the most profound learning experiences of your life. It will not always be easy, but if you are willing to invest the requisite amounts of emotional and intellectual energy, you will be forever changed. MSID staff and faculty will do everything in their power to assist you in this adventure, but ultimately it is you who will make the experience what it is.

# Cultural Adjustment

## The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks, or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another, or you may skip a step entirely.

**Initial Fascination:** On arrival, your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic. You feel like the focus of attention and activity.

**Initial Culture Shock:** The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

**Surface Adjustment:** After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

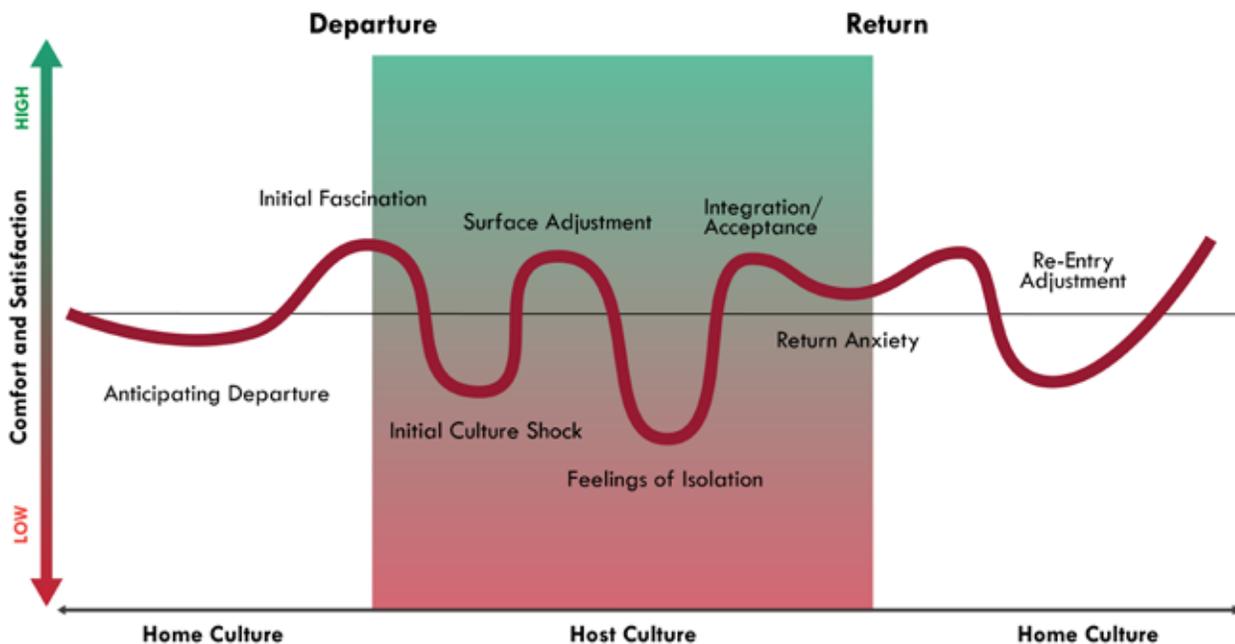
**Feelings of Isolation:** Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process. A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

**Integration/Acceptance:** After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, and professional and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

**Return Anxiety:** Just when you feel at home in the new country, it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person, and apprehension grows when you think about people at home who may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases, you may experience changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating, or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment; however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your program’s on-site support staff.



Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Galloway (1963)

Cultural Adjustment Curve

# Appendix

## Packing

The following is a list developed by past MSID students and in-country staff. Adapt it to suit your own style and priorities. You will not need all the items on the packing list; they are only suggestions.

### Luggage

Be sure to check with your airline about the baggage allowance when trying to decide what luggage to bring. In general, we recommend trying to pack lightly. Most students bring one medium suitcase, a smaller carry-on bag that can be used for weekend travel, and a small backpack/daypack.

### Clothing

#### Tops

- 3–4 short-sleeved shirts
- 2 lightweight long-sleeved shirts
- 1 lightweight sweatshirt/sweater/fleece
- 1 heavier sweater/fleece

#### Bottoms

- 3–4 pairs of bottoms (jeans, casual pants, leggings, etc.)
- 1 pair of athletic shorts (for the beach)
- 1 pair of sweatpants/athletic pants
- 1–2 knee-length dresses/skirts or pairs of dress pants

#### Outfits

- 1–2 dressy outfits for going out
- 1 business-casual outfit
- 1–2 pairs of pajamas

#### Shoes

Comfortable, durable footwear is key!

- 1–2 pairs of comfortable, casual shoes
- 1–2 pairs of athletic shoes (hiking shoes if you have them)
- 1 pair of dress shoes
- 1 pair of athletic sandals/flip-flops (for shower/beach)
- 1 pair of comfy house shoes/slippers

#### Outerwear

- 1 lightweight jacket
- 1 waterproof/rain jacket
- Sun hat/cap
- 1–2 pairs of warm wool socks
- Scarf and lightweight hat/mittens for chilly weather

## Electronics

Always pack these in your carry-on bag, not in checked luggage.

- Camera
- US phone/smartphone
- Laptop
- Flash drive
- Inexpensive wristwatch (waterproof is preferable!)
- All chargers for US phone, laptop, camera, etc.
- Converter for 3-prong to 2-prong outlets
- Copies of serial numbers for all electronics
- Headphones

## Toiletries

- Basic toiletry items (toothpaste, deodorant, brush, razor, etc.)
- Sunscreen with high SPF
- Dry shampoo, makeup, or other specialty personal care/beauty products
- Tampons/feminine products

## Medications

- 4 months of all pills and prescriptions, in their original bottles, **packed in carry-on bag with any original prescription documents you may have**
- Ibuprofen/Tylenol
- Cold medications (just in case)
- Malaria pills, diarrhea pills, Dramamine, anything the doctor gave you at the travel clinic
- All eye care products you may need (glasses, contacts, solution)
- Bug spray and itch cream for bug bites (hydrocortisone works great)

## Other Things to Consider

- Small packets of Kleenex
- Neosporin/Band-Aids
- Yeast infection medication
- Vitamins
- Lip balm (with sunscreen)
- Aloe vera gel
- Hand sanitizer

## Personal/Miscellaneous Items

- School supplies
- Money belt and US cash in small bills
- Copy of passport

- Reusable water bottle
- Snacks/granola bars
- Paperback book
- Journal
- Small lock
- Bandanas/handkerchiefs/buff
- Swimsuit
- Packable towel
- Umbrella
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Pocketknife (checked luggage only)
- Sunglasses

# STUDENT INDEPENDENT TRAVEL FORM

This form must be completed for all independent travel as indicated by the release and waiver you signed prior to participation. Failure to complete in full and submit prior to departure will be grounds for review and sanctions as outlined in the Policy on Student Conduct in Education Abroad Opportunities ([UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/policies/rightsResponsibilities/Student\\_Conduct\\_17\\_web.pdf](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/policies/rightsResponsibilities/Student_Conduct_17_web.pdf)).

**Note:**

1. You are not allowed to travel to a country or region under US State Department Travel Advisory Levels 3 and 4 or a country or region not recognized by the US government (e.g., North Korea) without prior approval. A copy of the suspension committee approval is required with this form.
2. Independent travel should not interfere with academic work, classes, or events. On-site staff has the authority to deny travel due to such conflicts.
3. Failure to return on time may be subject to dismissal. Travel with your program contact details and keep the staff updated on any changes to your plans.

**Complete one form per student, per trip.**

Student name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed destination(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Departure date \_\_\_\_\_ Return date \_\_\_\_\_

US emergency contact name, email, and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information while traveling (below):

Dates at this location	City and country	Name of hotel or host	Phone number	Email address

**Transportation Information:**

**Additional Information:**

**Signatures**

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized On-Site Staff Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledge receipt: The form must be signed and dated by both the student and the authorized on-site staff person prior to travel and kept on file for the duration of program period.

# CONDUCTING RESEARCH ABROAD

## Key Guidelines

### What is a research project?

A research project involves a systematic investigation of a specific topic, question, hypothesis, or theory. The purpose of research is to establish new knowledge or confirm what is already known. The research process involves discovery, documentation, and interpretation using a variety of reliable, scholarly resources. Under the guidance of a project supervisor, students consult relevant primary and secondary sources, analyze findings, and draw conclusions culminating in a final paper or project that demonstrates the knowledge gained through the investigation. Research typically does not involve applied work, internship, or volunteer activities.

### What is IRB?

IRBs (Institutional Review Boards) are formally designated committees to review, approve, and monitor research that focuses on gathering and analyzing private identifiable data about individuals. There are special additional protections for certain vulnerable populations.

Given the short duration of a study abroad program, you should select research topics that do not include require IRB review. The University's IRB process (even an exempt review) is intensive, takes time, requires finalized project and protocol, and must be completed prior to initiating any research abroad. Since IRB only reviews projects if the overseas project supervisor, full research project, methodology clarification, and required methodological training are confirmed, human subjects research during study abroad programs is highly discouraged. In addition, undergraduate students rarely have completed the level of methodological training to be approved by IRB.

### What should I know about conducting research abroad?

Research projects that focus on policies, procedures, methods, products, and organizations do not require IRB review and are great options for students interested in social science research abroad. With these kinds of projects, students can engage with and interview experts in the field without needing IRB review as long as the project does not focus on an individual's personal history/beliefs/background. Keep in mind that projects that focus on observation and documentation may not be considered research and, therefore, do not require IRB approval.

It is *essential* to consult with the overseas staff regarding your project and the approach you plan to take *before* initiating your research. Particularly if you plan to conduct a survey or interviews, you must discuss your questions with the overseas staff and receive approval for all questions in advance. The overseas staff will consult with the LAC, as needed.

Students who fail to modify their project to meet overseas staff and LAC expectations regarding IRB considerations risk receiving a failing grade for that course. It is not appropriate to engage in research that requires IRB clearance without having obtained the clearance in advance.

For more details, visit the IRB research web page: [www.research.umn.edu/irb/](http://www.research.umn.edu/irb/)

### What restrictions should I keep in mind regarding my primary sources?

Any data that you use for your research must be publicly available or previously published. Private medical files, for example, require IRB approval and should not be consulted. Interviewing individuals with expertise in the relevant field is allowed, as long as the focus is on policies, practices, and procedures and/or their expert views on these policies, practices and procedures. Avoid collecting private identifiable data.

IRB has significant restrictions on "sensitive populations," vulnerable populations, and minors. These populations cannot be consulted or interviewed without IRB clearance and should not be part of a research abroad project.

### What if I have IRB clearance from my home university?

IRB approval from your home school does not provide clearance to engage in human subjects research during your study abroad program. Contact the LAC for further guidance, as human subjects research on an LAC program must go through the U of M IRB process.