

STUDY ABROAD PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST 2011

The information in this document should be used as a general guide for students. As always, programs vary greatly which may impact the timeline for your specific study abroad program. Please keep in mind, you may need to adhere to a slightly different timeline based on your program.

12 – 18 MONTHS PRIOR TO DEPARTING FOR STUDY ABROAD

- _____ Attend a **First-Step Meeting** offered through Padnos International Center or access this information online by going to www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad → Getting Started→First Step Meeting.
- _____ Begin researching study abroad program options.
- _____ Meet with your primary academic advisor to discuss your academic needs and interests.
- _____ Research grant and scholarship opportunities. Many scholarship applications are due 12-18 months prior to when you plan to study abroad.
- _____ Consider your funding sources to help meet the costs associated with studying abroad.

6 - 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO DEPARTING FOR STUDY ABROAD

- _____ **Apply for study abroad through GVSU.** Check online at www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad for application deadlines.
- _____ **Apply for a passport.**
- _____ Research **entry requirements (visa)** for the host country. You will not need to apply until 90-120 days prior to departure, but it is good for you to read what the requirements are for entry into the host country and to become familiar with the visa application instructions. For a link to entry requirements visit the website of the Embassy or Consulate that has jurisdiction over your place of permanent residence. For countries that require an FBI background check, please note that this process could take 8-12 weeks.
- _____ Complete your **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** for the year you plan to be abroad. FAFSA's priority application deadline is March 1. For additional information, contact the Financial Aid Office at (616) 331-3234 or visit their website at www.gvsu.edu/financialaid.

Summer study abroad students must also complete the **Spring/Summer Application for Financial Aid which will be available March 22.**

DUE IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOU RECEIVE GVSU ACCEPTANCE IN OASIS

- _____ **Read your GVSU acceptance letter.**

- _____ **Apply to your host university/organization**, if applicable. Most students will first apply to GVSU and will then be invited to apply to their host university for final approval.
- _____ **Check your OASIS Message Center often**. PIC will be posting important information through OASIS on a regular basis.
- _____ Complete the **Study Abroad Expense Form** available in OASIS.
- _____ Complete the **Study Abroad Credit Form**. Reminder: you will receive credit (CR) or no credit (NC) for the courses you complete abroad. Credit (CR) will be given for courses in which you receive a grade of a C or better.
- _____ Make arrangements for someone back at home to assist you with issues that arise while you are abroad. We recommend that you consider completing a **Power of Attorney** form in order to give someone the right to act on your behalf while you are gone. You can obtain a copy of the Power of Attorney form by logging into your OASIS account and visiting the Post Acceptance section. This form does need to be notarized. PIC offers Notary Public Services.

DUE 60- 90 DAYS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- _____ **Apply for a visa (if necessary)**. Visa application procedures vary by country. PIC recommends you look at the application instructions from the Consulate of the host country you will study in at least 3 months prior to your departure so you can inform yourself of what paperwork is required and how long it may take to apply for a visa to be processed.
- _____ If you are expecting to receive financial aid from GVSU **AND** your program fees are due to your study abroad program prior to the date you are scheduled to receive your financial aid check, you should submit a **Program Fee Deferment Request**. To make this request, simply go into your OASIS account, go to the section where you have your **Post Acceptance** information and select Program Fee Deferment. Please submit this request at least **two weeks prior** to your first payment deadline. This is **not** typically an option for students participating in exchange programs.
- _____ Attend a required Pre-Departure Study Abroad Orientation Meeting through PIC. You will receive information in OASIS on the orientation dates and times available.
- _____ Register online through Banner for IS 380. Please reference the IS 380 registration information provided in your orientation packet for details. Students must be given permission to register for this placeholder course **after** participating in the required orientation. If you are unable to register for IS 380, contact Chris Borda at bordac@gvsu.edu.
- _____ **Theme Proposal**. Students who are interested in proposing a study abroad theme must submit the appropriate Study Abroad Theme Proposal two months prior to departure.
- _____ **General Education credit**. Students who are interested in requesting that a study abroad course meet a general education requirement should submit the *Student Concern Form* to the Student

Academic Success Center (200 STU, 1-3588). Students must attach a copy of the overseas course description and the GVSU departmental approval to the Student Concern Form.

_____ Complete the GVSU **Health Information Form** in OASIS under the Post Acceptance section.

_____ Complete the GVSU **Health Insurance Form** in OASIS under the Post Acceptance section.

_____ Provide PIC with a copy of your **Passport Information Page**.

_____ Provide PIC with a copy of your **Health Insurance card**.

_____ Purchase the International Student Identity Card (ISIC). Cards are available through GVSU's Record's Office or online at www.isic.org. (OPTIONAL)

Early Financial Aid Checks - Spring/Summer Participants

_____ If your Program Start Date in OASIS is **before May 23, 2011**, you will automatically receive your financial aid refund check on or around April 22, 2011. If your departure date in OASIS is after May 23, you will receive your financial aid on or around May 20, 2011.

Please check your Program Start Date in OASIS if you are expecting to receive aid from GVSU.

Early Financial Aid Checks - Fall/Academic Year Participants

- If your Program Start Date in OASIS is on or **before August 5, 2011** for Fall/AY – see a Financial Aid Counselor for special arrangements.
- If your Program State Date in OASIS is between **August 6 – August 31, 2011** – your financial aid refund check will automatically be issued to you on or around August 1.
- If your Program Start Date in OASIS is **September 1 – September 15, 2011** – your financial aid refund check will automatically be issued to you on or around August 26, 2011.
- If your Program Start Date in OASIS is after September 15, 2011- your financial aid refund check will be available on or around September 9.

Please check your Program Start Date in OASIS if you are expecting to receive aid from GVSU.

_____ Make arrangements to get immunization shots. For information on recommended immunizations for the country you will be studying in, visit the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov. If you have questions about the immunizations you should be getting, please contact your primary care physician or visit the Kent County Health Department.

DUE 30- 60 DAYS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

_____ Pay all charges posted to your GVSU student account. This includes any parking fees, library fines, tuition, program fees, or other university charges. If you fail to pay the balance due, you may be dropped from your IS 380 course which is a required placeholder course for study abroad.

Note: Students who are participating in an exchange program where tuition and/or a program fee is paid to GVSU, you are asked to pay any outstanding balance in accordance with the normal GVSU tuition payment deadlines for the semester you will be abroad. Payment deadlines can be found on the Student Account's website at: www.gvsu.edu/studentaccounts.

- _____ Enter your flight details into your OASIS account. **Do not secure your airfare until you have received formal acceptance to your host institution or study abroad provider AND have the confirmed dates you are expected to arrive at the host institution.**
- _____ Develop your packing list of items you will need to take abroad.
- _____ If you will be abroad during an election cycle and you wish you to participate, you will need to make arrangements for an absentee ballot. For additional information, contact your local County Board of Elections or County Clerk's Office.
- _____ Review the U.S. State Department website for important travel, health and safety information <http://travel.state.gov>.

DUE 1-2 WEEKS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- _____ **Register your trip** with the US State Department by visiting the web at <http://travel.state.gov>.
- _____ Secure confirmation on your **in-country contact information** (i.e. address, phone number, on-site contact person). Note: some Embassies/Consulates require proof of housing much earlier in the process. If you need a visa and need to show proof of housing, you may need to prepare this information much earlier.
- _____ **Notify your credit card company and bank** to inform them of your planned travel overseas.
- _____ **Photocopy all of your important documents** and cards that you will be taking with you (i.e. copy of your passport, copy of all credit/debit cards you will take, copy of your visa (if you have one), copy of your ISIC or health insurance information, copy of your flight itinerary, in-country contact person, etc.). Prepare a folder for the person at home who will serve as your main contact in the event that your information is lost or stolen.
- _____ **Discuss an emergency plan with your family.** If there is a natural disaster or some other critical incident that takes place in your host country or city, please discuss what the plan will be to get information back home regarding your health and safety. Please keep in mind that during emergencies, most phone lines are overloaded. We recommend you look at alternative communication methods such as an email back home. If you have access to a cell phone, you may consider using this as a back-up if phone lines are accessible.
Note: PIC also recommends that at least one of your emergency contacts have a valid passport in the event of an emergency.
- _____ **Discuss a plan for when you will call home after you arrive in your host country.** Your contacts at home will want to hear from you right away. If you do not establish a plan or you do not follow that plan, it does create stress for those back home. It is possible that you may not have easy access to a phone within the first 24-48 hours. We have also heard from students that their calling cards did not work and they needed to find calling cards in their host country. Please inform your family that the phone systems will be different and you may not have immediate access or it may take a day or two to figure out how to use the system. Many programs will make sure that students can contact home within the first day, but this is not

always possible. **Please give your family your in-country contact information so they can call you directly once you have arrived in your host country.**

WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD

_____ **Check your OASIS regularly.** We may be sending you important announcements from time to time that you will not want to miss. If your contact information changes, please make sure we are notified or you may not receive important information.

_____ We ask that you stay in contact with either Rebecca Hambleton hambletr@gvsu.edu or Chris Borda bordac@gvsu.edu while you are abroad and alert us of any problems you might be having or highlights you would like to share!

_____ Students participating in a semester or yearlong program **MUST** remain a full-time student (equivalent to 12-15 credits here at GVSU) the entire time you are on your study abroad program. If for any reason you go above or below the 12-15 credit block, contact Chris Borda immediately. There may be implications that you will want to be aware of.

SUMMER APPLICANTS: Students studying abroad during the Spring/Summer semester may take variable credit, but Federal Financial Aid will only be available to students registered for a minimum of 6 credits.

_____ If you are planning to be overseas during the Winter semester, it is important that you pay close attention to important deadlines that take place during this time.

For example:

- ✓ Priority consideration for filing the **FAFSA** is **March 1st**. If you plan to attend GVSU during the next academic year, you will not want to miss this deadline or you may jeopardize your ability to obtain Federal Financial Aid.
- ✓ **Tax Returns** are due April 15th (check government websites for details and forms)
- ✓ Applying for **Graduation** if you are in your last semester at GVSU.
- ✓ **Housing sign-up.** If you are planning to live on-campus once you return from study abroad, you will not want to miss the priority deadline!
- ✓ **Class registration.** Students are allowed to sign-up for classes for the following academic year in March. If you are planning to return to GVSU, you will want to register for your classes as soon as possible. If you need assistance with classes that require a permit, please contact our office and we will help you get connected to the correct person that can assist you with your request.
- ✓ **Graduate program applications.** Most graduate programs seek applications between January – May. If you are graduating and interested in graduate school, research the deadlines well in advance.
- ✓ **Important tests (MCAT, LSAT, GRE).** Most of these tests are offered around the globe, but they all require advanced registration. In order not to miss important testing dates, research this in advance!

UPON YOUR RETURN

- _____ Notify the Padnos International Center of your contact information upon your return.
- _____ Check with PIC to confirm that the courses you completed at your host institution match with the courses you had evaluated by GVSU faculty prior to your departure. Refer to your **Study Abroad Credit Form** for details on the courses you had pre-approved.
- _____ Make sure that your transcript from your host institution is sent directly to the Padnos International Center. GVSU will not grant credit for courses taken abroad without official documentation. **Please note:** it may take anywhere from several weeks to several months for transcripts to be sent from a host institution abroad.
- _____ Bring in a CD of photos from your trip to PIC (optional).
- _____ Sign-up for PIC Corp to help future study abroad students during the pre-departure orientation. (optional). Email Chris Borda at bordac@gvsu.edu for details.
- _____ Sign-up to be a mentor to new international students. Contact Liz Smith at smithliz@gvsu.edu for details (optional).

REMINDER FOR ACADEMIC YEAR STUDENTS

- _____ Students who are participating in an exchange program for an academic year are reminded that tuition for Winter semester is due to GVSU in December.
- _____ **Transcript after Fall semester.** Students who are abroad for fall and winter semesters may or may not receive a transcript once they have completed the fall semester. Many programs only send one transcript at the end of the program. Students who are relying on being eligible to register at a new status (ex. Junior earning enough credits to register as a Senior during GVSU's next open registration cycle), should make certain that PIC receives a transcript after the completion of your fall semester, so that we can account for those courses. It is your responsibility to request a transcript to be sent to PIC after you complete the fall semester. Please contact Chris Borda at bordac@gvsu.edu to inform him that you will need your credits transferred after the fall semester so that he track the progress of your transfer of credits. Do not wait until February or March to contact PIC. At that point, it may be too late to process the transfer of credit in time for open registration.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your study abroad program, please contact the Padnos International Center to schedule an appointment with either Rebecca Hambleton or Chris Borda.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

- _____ I know who to contact in the event of an emergency while abroad and have packed the GVSU Emergency Assistance information.
- _____ I have thoroughly reviewed the **Center for Disease Control** information and **Consular Information Sheet(s)** for the countries I will be visiting.

_____ I understand that the availability of some prescription medications may be limited. I am bringing an ample supply of medications I am currently taking to last for the duration of time that I will be abroad. I have also checked with my host country's Embassy for information on any restrictions that may apply regarding bringing prescription medications into the country.

IMPORTANT: Always pack medications in your carry-on luggage. DO NOT put prescription medication in your checked luggage.

_____ I have a copy of my prescription(s) (including information on the generic equivalent) and a letter from my physician describing the medication I will be carrying, how much I should have and what it is for.

_____ I am aware of the recommended immunizations for all of the countries in which I will be traveling.

_____ I have checked my records to ensure that I have received all routine immunizations for tetanus, diphtheria, measles, mumps, rubella, and polio.

_____ I have made arrangements to meet with a health care professional to discuss any questions or concerns I have relating to required or recommended immunizations.

_____ I have carefully reviewed my health insurance policy and understand what I am covered for in the event of illness or injury overseas. I have also explored the limitations that may apply to this policy and have considered supplemental plans that are available to me.

LEGALITIES AND CUSTOMS

_____ I understand that I am subject to the laws of all the countries that I will be visiting.

_____ I understand that I am subject to the laws and customs with regard to alcohol and drug use in all countries that I will be visiting.

_____ I am aware that the sexual mores and legal and illegal practices may be different in the countries that I will be visiting.

_____ I understand that, as an American citizen, if I am caught engaging in illegal activity while abroad, there is little that GVSU or the US Government can do to assist me.

DIET

_____ I know what kinds of foods are typical of the region I am visiting.

_____ I am aware of the quality of the drinking water in the region and plan to take necessary precautions for disinfecting contaminated water, if necessary.

_____ I understand that at times a strict vegetarian or other diet may be difficult to accommodate and have planned accordingly for this possible difficulty.

SOURCES TO CONSULT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Center for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov	World Health Organization www.who.int
Mobility International (Travelers with various disabilities) www.miusa.org	U.S. Public Health Service www.usphs.gov
International Red Cross www.redcross.int/en	State Department Overseas Citizens Emergency Center (202) 647-5225
A Safe Trip Abroad www.travel.state.gov	International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT) www.iamat.org
Highway to Health - City Health Profiles www.highwaytohealth.com	The Travel Clinic www.drwisetravel.com
National Aids Clearinghouse http://cscnpin.org	Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad www.travel.state.gov/medical.html