

~ Full Semester Study Away Programs ~  
A Guide for Parents

SUPPORTIVE

INFORMED

Be

PREPARED

ENCOURAGING

# Be. . .

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*Grateful acknowledgement is made to colleagues at Purdue University, whose comments and documents were heavily drawn upon.*

# Be **Supportive**

## A WORD FROM EXPLORATIONS

### Mission Statement

The Baldwin-Wallace College Explorations/Study Abroad Center is part of a larger effort to expand students' learning context by linking the curriculum to the world beyond the classroom. While traveling throughout the world, students earn B-W credit for courses, independent study projects, and/or field experiences.

Your student is thinking about or possibly has decided to study abroad. We hope that you are proud that he or she is interested in seeing more of the world, making new friends, developing cross cultural competence and enhancing his or her academic career prospects.

As a parent, it is often very exciting and sometimes scary when a student studies abroad. Will they be safe? How can we afford to let them study abroad? How can I contact them while they are overseas?

These are among the many questions that will be asked during the planning stages of your student's study abroad experience. Perhaps a question you may be asking yourself is "How can I help?"

When your student makes the decision to study abroad they will be spending the semester attending to logistical matters, as well as the mental and emotional preparations involved in studying abroad. We know you will be with him or her every step of the way. This guide was designed for parents, to help your student get the most out of his/her study

abroad experience. We hope you will find it useful and helpful.

A copy of this guide along with other useful websites and references can be found on our website at:

[www.bw.edu/explorations](http://www.bw.edu/explorations)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The Explorations/Study Abroad Office is here to assist you with any questions or concerns you have while your student is preparing to study abroad and while they are away. Staff and recent study abroad participants are available during normal business hours.

The Explorations/Study Abroad Office is located at:

Baldwin-Wallace College  
Explorations/Study Abroad  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Student Union  
275 Eastland Road  
Berea, OH 44017  
Phone: 440-826-2231  
Fax: 440-826-3021  
Email: [explore@bw.edu](mailto:explore@bw.edu)  
Website: [www.bw.edu/explorations](http://www.bw.edu/explorations)

## Emergency Contact Information

If there is a *serious* emergency after normal business hours, please call Safety and Security at Baldwin-Wallace College at 440-826-2000. They will contact one of the Explorations/Study Abroad staff immediately.

*Staff members:*

Christie Shrefler, Director  
Kristen Catrina, Advisor

# Be **Informed**

## The Benefits of Studying Abroad

In today's global society, international experience has become an essential component of higher education. Studying abroad enriches student's academic experience. They get to live in interesting places, have many opportunities to visit historically and culturally significant sites, examine artifacts they have only read about and interact with local students and faculty. Many will have to adjust to the rigor of a new academic system that usually demands more independence and initiative. Many students return to Baldwin-Wallace after their semester abroad more focused, and with a better idea of what they want to accomplish after graduation.

The challenges that come with living in another culture, forces students to perfect interpersonal and communication skills, increase their sensitivity of other cultures, become more adaptable, assertive and independent.

We are increasingly becoming a global community and marketplace. Overseas experience can enhance students' professional credentials. Studying abroad makes your student highly marketable, enhances their resume, strengthens their ability to communicate despite barriers, and provides them with overseas contacts. The personal characteristics and new perspectives that students develop while overseas are valued more and more by companies who seek employees who can speak a second language, thrive outside their comfort zone, and work more comfortably in a diverse environment.

Your student's decision to study abroad will be a worthwhile investment!

## The Student's Responsibilities

The Explorations/Study Abroad Office is here to assist your student while they are preparing to study abroad. We are available to help your student through all of the stages of studying abroad – researching the "perfect" host institution, assisting them through the application process, offering tips on packing and providing correspondence while abroad. We will also offer a pre-departure session and a welcome back session to help them re-adjust upon their return to Baldwin-Wallace. While we are always available to answer questions and offer assistance, the student should assume the primary responsibility of staying on top of things.

We expect the student to complete all Baldwin-Wallace Study Abroad required forms, return host university forms in a timely manner, obtain course approval, secure requisite travel documents, make travel plans, and do the necessary preparations for life overseas (familiarizing himself or herself with the host country, getting information about the academic program, talking with returned and exchange students, setting up a communication plan with family and friends, attending to financial matters, and others).

Upon acceptance to the host university your student will receive a packet of information in the mail, or get important documents by email. These materials could include an official letter of acceptance, housing information, preregistration forms, visa application information, arrival instructions, orientation information, and general university information.

We encourage our students to keep you informed about his or her study abroad program or to refer you to the appropriate websites and resources for additional information. The federal law known as the Family Education Reform Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents us from releasing information that concerns students, even to immediate family members. Students can choose however to give our office permission to release information to specified individuals by completing the "Release of Student Information" section on our general application form. If you have any questions your first point of contact should be your students who will most likely have the information.

## Academic Policy

Study Abroad programs are just that-STUDY. They are not vacations or excursions in foreign countries or a break from a student's studies at Baldwin-Wallace. We expect students to attend class, meet all course requirements, stay for the duration of the program, take their exams, and earn respectable grades during their time overseas.

The Study Abroad/Explorations Office goal is to ensure that students graduate on time if they study abroad. Which is why, we encourage students to make plans as early as possible to study abroad so they can choose the program that will allow them to take courses to fit their Baldwin-Wallace degree program.

All Explorations/Study Abroad programs earn credit toward B-W graduation. Credit hours, not letter grades are transferred. Before departure your student must work with his or her academic advisor and the study abroad office to choose courses that he or she can take overseas. The overseas courses and the corresponding course equivalents will be recorded on the Program Permit Form which the student must file with the Explorations/Study Abroad Office prior to departure. Occasionally, students have to adjust their schedule and courses once they arrive at their host university. If the courses change while your student is abroad (from those that have already been approved) they must contact the Explorations/Study Abroad Office immediately. We understand that this happens and will guide your student in adjusting their schedule so they will receive proper credit.

The student's transcript generally arrives from the host institution 4-8 weeks after the study abroad period has been completed. There is no deadline for sending in transcripts and they are mailed to the Explorations/Study Abroad Office following the host universities timetable. Once we have your student's transcript, the Explorations/Study Abroad Office identifies the equivalent B-W course from the Program Permit Form in the student's file and assigns U.S. grades to these courses in accordance with the grade equivalency scale. The Explorations/Study Abroad Office works with the Registration office, where individual courses and

grades are entered into the student's official record. The entire process may take up to several months.

The student Study Away Handbook contains extensive discussion of the academic policy. We encourage you and your student to become familiar with it.

## Program Costs & Financial Aid

Baldwin-Wallace college students will generally pay B-W tuition, room and board for their program (some exceptions apply). Program costs including airfare, personal incidentals etc. generally run somewhere between, \$2000-\$4000 more than the cost of tuition, room and board at B-W for one semester. This of course will differ depending on spending habits.

Board money is distributed differently depending on the program. For example, some programs will include a meal plan and students will be given a card similar to the JacketExpress. Others will be self-catered and students will receive a check equivalent to B-W board costs for that semester. The Explorations/Study Abroad Office has additional program specific information.

Financial aid and scholarships are available for those students who are eligible. In addition, students studying abroad for the first time may qualify for a study abroad grant. If your student is eligible for federal aid or receives scholarships, they may use those resources to help fund B-W sponsored educational trips abroad (as long as they are a full time student). Once the cost of the program has been determined, the Financial Aid Office will help apply the aid package to the program.

Here are a few good starting points:

<http://www.istc.umn.edu/study/scholarships.html>

<http://www.finaid.com/>

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

The B-W Explorations/Study Abroad Office will make all payments, except airfare and deposits. All bills will be sent directly to the Explorations/Study Abroad Office for payment. At the beginning of the semester away, your student's B-W account will be charged for the cost of the program. If bills are sent home, do not pay them. Instead forward them to the Explorations/Study Abroad Office.

## Withdrawal/Cancellation Policy

Refer to the Students Study Abroad Handbook for detailed information.

**Be Safe**

## Safety Issues

You can be assured that Baldwin-Wallace College's first responsibility is to ensure the safety of your student during their time away. Our approach to safety includes careful monitoring of U.S. Department of State travel warnings and advisories, regular consultations with colleagues around the country who are involved in the administration of study abroad programs, and with responsible officials of foreign host universities. Emergency procedures are in place, including medical and general emergency evacuation procedures. In the event of relevant U.S. State Department public announcements, worldwide cautions, or travel warnings, B-W will contact program staff and students abroad.

We cannot, however, guarantee the absolute safety of each participant or ensure that risk will not be greater than at home. Similarly, we also cannot

monitor the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of individual participants any more than the case on the home campus. We can only hope that our students use common sense when going about their daily life abroad.

We address safety issues and concerns thoroughly in the student Study Away Handbook and during the mandatory pre-departure session. We encourage you to go through the safety tips listed in the study abroad handbook and discuss them with your student.

## Health Information

Good health is important to assure your student's semester is a success. As part of the application, your student must complete a Medical History Form. It is your student's responsibility to give the Explorations/Study Abroad Office current information about any personal, medical, physical, and mental conditions. All information is confidential and does not affect student's acceptance or denial into a program. Students with documented disabilities that will need to arrange accommodations needs to contact the Explorations/Study Abroad Office to get assistance in locating on-site support networks.

Additional information on immunization requirements can be found in the students Study Abroad Handbook.

## Insurance Coverage for Your Student

The medical insurance that covers your family is not always valid outside the United States. Furthermore doctors and hospitals abroad often expect immediate cash payments for medical services. For these reasons Baldwin-Wallace College has mandated that all study abroad participants have international health insurance coverage. Students will be enrolled by the Explorations/Study Abroad Office for approximately \$36 per month with HTH Worldwide Insurance. The charge for the semester will be included in the invoice you receive. Students do not need to file an application or complete an enrollment form this will all be processed by the Explorations/Study Abroad Office. Coverage duration varies by program and term, but generally

will start a day or two before the official program date and terminate about a week after the program's conclusion.

Your student will receive an email from HTH supplying them with their ID number and directing them to the hthstudents.com website. They will then be able to register and print their insurance card. Hthstudents.com gives your student access to benefit information, local in-network doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, health and security information, medical translation guides, and more.

# Be **Encouraging**

## Culture Shock

Being able to adjust to the new environment and culture is perhaps one of the most important facets of a student's experience abroad. Not only will the cross-cultural adjustment help in his or her learning and development in a new country, it will make the experience more rewarding and interesting. While nearly everyone goes through a period of adjustment, i.e., when going off to college, beginning a new job, or moving to a new city, starting life in a foreign country is relatively more challenging. "Culture shock" is the term given to the collection of feelings that sometimes arise when travelers are overwhelmed by cultural differences. The symptoms can include feeling lonely, homesick, overwhelmed, fearful, angry, confused or judgmental. The onset, severity, and length of time with which culture shock will affect any one student will vary. More experienced travelers could snap out of it rather quickly, while others might have to work a tad harder to get past the feelings of distress.

The thing to always keep in mind is: ***culture shock is a common and a natural part of the study abroad experience.*** When students first arrive at the host country, they all feel happy and excited. Everything is new and interesting, and they want to explore it all. This is the honeymoon stage when students fall in love with the host country and nothing could possibly get in the way of a fabulous experience. A few days, weeks, or months later, the students start feeling somewhat disillusioned and while things in the environment have remained the same, they now regard everything negatively. This is the next stage of culture shock and the time when some students are apt to feel that they've made a mistake and would like to return home. The students are finally able to discern cultural differences and feel like interlopers in the new culture. They're also exhausted from constantly making behavioral adjustments and frustrated because the usual emotional support system – family and friends – are not there. Fortunately, with effort and time, this stage usually passes and the students achieve a state of balance or equilibrium with the environment. This is the stage when the students become more integrated into the host culture, aware of cultural expectations, and cognizant of the behaviors and attitudes of people from that country. The anger and disappointment fade as the students realize that they can function effectively outside the home culture. If there is one *sure thing* about culture shock — it is that it has an ephemeral nature. It will end — but it will not disappear magically.

At the mandatory pre-departure meeting, we discuss the stages of culture shock, how to recognize the behaviors usually elicited at each stage, and the steps students can take to offset the symptoms. We hope you would not become distressed and alarmed if your student starts complaining about his or her situation. In all likelihood, he or she is going through the second stage of culture shock. Empathize, but urge your student to keep his or her chin up and continue on. Remind him or her of all the things that could be gained from this experience. Applaud the student's efforts to become immersed in the host culture. Encourage him or her to continue initiating interactions with fellow students or the host family, participating in local or university activities, and learning from mistakes. In a few weeks, the student is likely to look back at these seemingly dark days and be incredulous that he or she even considered

returning home! Thanks to you, they did not have to miss out on this great experience!

## The Supportive Family

Studying abroad will certainly be a defining period in your student's educational experience. It will be a personal journey that will likely transform him or her into a global citizen with new ideas and perspectives about the world and its people. Studying abroad is also an experience that will distinguish your student from peers and enable him or her to stand out in the eyes of prospective employers or post graduate interviewers. Just the same, we understand that there will be conflicting feelings about the upcoming experience. You and your student are excited at the opportunities that lie ahead but at the same time, there is some trepidation about being several thousand miles apart. Fortunately, there are some things you can do before, during, and after the study abroad period to support and maximize the learning experience of your student. Your support is very important and how you handle the time away will go a long way toward enabling your student to thrive and learn from the overseas experience.

## Encourage your student to be in charge of pre-departure preparations

Students will have to do many of the tasks involved in preparing to study abroad while attending to their regular semester activities. Yes it is a delicate balance: ensuring your student is prepared for the time abroad while letting him or her take the lead at the beginning of this new experience. As tempting as it may be to relieve your student of some of the responsibilities, he or she will be in a better position to cope with next semester's challenges if the student attends to pre-departure preparations personally. Next semester, the reliable support network of family and friends will not be as readily available and the student must be prepared to fend for himself or herself. If the student has had very few opportunities to handle challenges at home, imagine how daunting it could be to have to do so in another culture. So stand back and let your student handle this responsibility.

## Stay in touch but maintain a level of distance

One way to reduce the feeling of homesickness next semester is for you and your student to stay in touch regularly. There is a close correlation between morale overseas and messages from home. Stay informed about current events in the country and region where the student is studying. Many friends and family find reading about the overseas location to be both interesting and a good way to feel more in touch with the experiences of their student. However, while you will be very eager to know everything about your student's novel experiences, it is usually not a good idea to encourage your student to call or email home *constantly*. If the student is always on the phone or the internet communicating with family and friends, the incentive to integrate with the community abroad is much decreased. Instead of exploring the host country, learning the traditions and norms of the host culture, and making friends with the locals, the student is spending precious time emailing or calling people back home. If the student is participating in a language program, he or she would more readily improve second language proficiency by immersion in that language rather than communicating extensively in English by email or phone.

You can support your student's efforts to become more immersed in the host culture by reassuring him or her that you do not expect frequent long email messages, a daily phone call, or text messages several times a day. By doing this, you are giving your student permission to spread his or her wings. Make it clear to your overseas scholar that you expect him or her to be resilient and resourceful enough to overcome minor road bumps along the way.

## Prepare for the transformation

Your student will return home likely changed by the experience. He or she may dress differently, like new foods, speak differently, express new political perspectives, or even speak disparagingly of the United States. This is not so unusual. Your daily routine probably changed very little during the time the student was abroad. On the other hand, your student's life was anything but routine! He or she was exposed to a plethora of new ideas, practices,

and philosophies. So, do expect some changes and be patient. It will take time before this person sorts through his or her experiences to determine which traits and personal lessons learned abroad are worth keeping.

Be prepared also for some reverse culture shock. After the excitement of being back and regaling friends and family with tales of their adventures, many students find themselves moping and feeling sad because they miss their new friends, the novel experiences that happened almost daily, the exciting activities, or their favorite food. Your student might express boredom, assert that his or her life has become quite dull, and tell you that he or she would like to go abroad again.

Your support, interest, and understanding will be crucial. Discussing these feelings and changes in your student's outlook is an excellent way of sharing his or her international experience. Encourage him or her to stay in touch with overseas friends but to find local avenues in which the knowledge and skills gained from their time abroad could be useful. In time, your student will fully readjust to being back though most likely changed by his or her time overseas.

# Be Prepared

## Pre-Departure Essentials

### Passport and Visas

A passport is the most essential document everyone needs in order to enter a foreign country. New passports could take 4-6 weeks for processing so we advise the students to apply early to avoid delay. If your student already has a passport, make sure it is valid until at least six months after his or her return date to the United States. General information about obtaining a passport can be found at the State Department website.

A visa is an entry/residence permit and official permission granted by the authorities of the country (via its Embassy or Consulate in the United States) where your student will study. Not everyone needs a student visa to study abroad. The Explorations/Study Abroad Office will inform your student if a visa is needed or not. In most cases, the student's original passport must be sent along with the visa application form, original letter of acceptance from the host university, and other required documentation. A visa is usually stamped or stapled to the passport. If the student has to apply for a visa, know the appropriate foreign consulate that has jurisdiction in the student's state of permanent residence. Students may be required to travel out of state to the consulate office in order for their visa application to be processed. Consular websites will have this information.

[http://travel.state.gov/passport\\_services.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html)

### Practical Matters

Refer to the Students Study Abroad Handbook for detailed information regarding; money, transportations, packing, electronic devices, etc.

## Helpful Websites

### General

- ❖ Country specific handbooks can be found at:  
<http://www.studentsabroad.com/>
- ❖ **Institute for International Education**  
<http://www.iie.org>  
  
Helpful hints on getting the most of study abroad programs. Good questions to ask yourself before you leave on your travels. Also has a section for travel grants.
- ❖ **Savvy Traveler**  
<http://www.savvytraveler.com/>  
Practical information for traveling. Plane, train, hostel, dining information. Travel warnings and safety issue. There are also travel stories to read.
- ❖ **CNN**  
<http://www.cnn.com/travel/>  
Check this site for international issues and warnings.
- ❖ **The Internet guide of Hostelling**  
<http://www.hostels.com>  
Find hostels all over Europe and the United States
- ❖ **Let's Go**  
<http://www.letsgo.com/>  
This is the most popular travel book out there. The website is full of very helpful information on where to eat, what to do, where to stay and how to get there.
- ❖ **The Lonely Planet**  
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>  
In-depth information about the specific country you are traveling to. Information on what time of year to go, festivals and holidays, history and culture.
- ❖ **State Department**  
<http://travel.state.gov/>  
Warnings and alerts categorized by country. A good idea to check this every few days while abroad.
- ❖ **Entry Requirements/Visas**  
<http://www.traveldocs.com/>  
<http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html>  
Just some info if you are confused by Visas and travel documentation.
- ❖ **Center for Disease Control**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel>  
Another good one to check every few days, especially if you are in a higher risk country.
- ❖ **World Health Organization**  
<http://www.who.int/>
- ❖ **General guides and articles**  
<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/>  
Articles with tons of tips on adjusting to a new culture and making your life abroad easier.
- ❖ **Guide to going abroad**  
<http://www.studyabroad.com/handbook/handbook.html>  
Very practical and useful information specifically for students studying abroad.
- ❖ **Reading lists**  
<http://www.uwsp.edu/studyabroad>  
Includes a list of further online resources

## Airfare Ticket Information

- ❖ **Student Universe**  
<http://www.studentuniverse.com/>
- ❖ **STA Travel**  
<http://www.sta.com>
- ❖ **Commercial airlines**  
<http://www.travel.org/airlines.html>
- ❖ **Best Fares Magazine**  
<http://bestfares.com/>
- ❖ **Inexpensive tickets**  
<http://travelocity.com>  
<http://expedia.com/>
- ❖ **Inexpensive airfare while in Europe**  
<http://ryanair.com>,  
<http://easyjet.com>

## Funding and Financing your Experience

- ❖ [http://www.studyabroad.com/forum/financial\\_aid.html](http://www.studyabroad.com/forum/financial_aid.html)
- ❖ <http://www.fund-raising.com/ideabank.html>
- ❖ <http://www.studyabroad.com/handbook/costs.html#aid>
- ❖ <http://fdncenter.org/index.html>
- ❖ <http://www.studentservices.com/fastweb>

## International Weather Information

- ❖ **Weather Channel**  
<http://www.weather.com/weather/int/>

