

# John Carroll University's Study Abroad Pre-departure & On-site Orientation Guide for Faculty Leaders:

“Preparing students to have healthy, safe, and  
secure experience abroad”

# Organizing & Conducting Pre-departure Orientations

## **Topics:**

1. Pre-Departure check list
2. Program logistics (e.g., passports, visas, packing)
3. Host culture specifics & cultural adjustment
4. Health issues (including mental health)
5. Safety and Security issues
6. Alcohol and drug issues
7. Student Conduct
8. Emergency planning and response
9. On-site orientation

# 1. Pre-departure Checklist

- Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the location(s) and country(ies) to which you are traveling by consulting the relevant resources available to you.
- Consult with your physician, as needed, regarding your own personal immunization needs and other personal health issues.
- Register your travel itinerary with the U.S. Department of State.
- Consider packing a first aid/medicine kit (but: see Sect. 4 below)
- Make photocopies of your passport, credit card, debit card, itinerary, prescriptions, etc.
- Confirm personal international health insurance coverage, including evacuation and repatriation benefits.
- Be familiar with JCU Study Abroad Emergency Protocol.
- Consult with Center for Global Education on any questions.

## 2. Travel & Program Logistics

- Check Passports (expiration dates) and Visas.
- International Travel Arrangements (dates, times).
- Airport security & restrictions (check with airline website).
- Program Schedule & Itinerary (discuss in detail; hand out a hard copy to every participant).
- Packing tips & airline baggage rules (discuss what belongs into hand luggage and what does not).
- Money and Banking issues (ATM cards usually best option; have back-up plan if card malfunctions or is lost).
- Communication (phone cards, cell phones, e-mail, skype).
- Local Transportation (discuss public transportation options, program's use of transportation, safe taxis, getting home late at night, etc.).

# 3. Host Culture Specifics & Cultural Adjustment

- Distribute and Discuss *CultureGrams* on country/ies of destination (available at CGE).
- Point out relevant periodicals & web-based news services where students can gather additional information.
- Encourage/require the purchase of tour books.
- Discuss current events where appropriate.
- Assign literature.
- Discuss cultural adjustment and symptoms of culture shock (consult JCU Study Abroad Handbook).

## 4. Health Issues

- **Never** dispense **immunization advice, medical advice, or drugs** – you are not qualified to do so! This is a serious, personal liability issue! Refer students instead to JCU Health Services, their physicians, and/or the Cuyahoga Co. Board of Health Travel Clinic.
- You may make medications from your travel kit available to students (e.g., Imodium, aspirin, bug spray, etc.), but students must make their own choice, which includes the choice not to take anything. Never “force” a medication on a student.
- Advise participants on how to transport prescription drugs & over the counter medications. Discuss what is available abroad.
- Participants should consider getting a check-up.
- Bring a basic first aid kit especially if traveling to a remote location; consider taking a first aid course.

## 4. More on Health Issues

- Set up and discuss procedures for obtaining local health care (local “911,” recommended doctors, hospitals; discuss insurance and payment process).
- Discuss food and water safety.
- Discuss other health concerns specific to locality.
- Discuss Jet Lag & sleep deprivation problems.
- Discuss risks of being sexually active during program.
- Caution about depression and eating disorders: the JCU Study Abroad Handbook offers many suggestions on this topic!
- **Insurance: all participants must purchase international travel insurance through CISI, available through the Center for Global Education. Participants also should check with their own health insurance to see if they are covered abroad.**

# 5. Safety Concerns

- Transportation safety, driving, traffic patterns.
- Climate, environmental hazards (e.g., swimming).
- Travel documents/personal possessions. Tips for keeping them safe.
- Accommodations (discuss personal & fire safety).
- Crime and personal safety: dangers of walking alone at night, more safe vs. less safe neighborhoods, avoiding US hangouts, street smarts, “situational awareness.”
- Issues related to ethnicity, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, dating, dress, sexual harassment.
- Political tensions, social concerns, poverty.
- Earthquakes and other natural disasters, if traveling to such a region.



# 6. Alcohol and Drug Use Abuse

- Over-consumption of alcohol is by far the biggest problem in study abroad! So this is a MUST COVER issue!
- JCU Alcohol Policy:
  - Generally, students of (local) legal age may consume alcohol in the host country except during program hours. But: program leaders may impose stricter rules, depending on the location and their own comfort level. However, leaders MUST be prepared to enforce their own rules!
  - Alcohol is banned from student residences on all short-term programs. Semester program rules are established in conjunction with host university.
  - University funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol for students.
  - Program leaders shall not purchase alcohol for students.
  - Faculty leaders should be familiar with host country's alcohol and drug laws.
- **Use of drugs that are illegal in the U.S. will result in immediate dismissal from the program, even in countries where such use may be legal or tolerated.**

# 7. Student Conduct Expectations:

- Students are subject to JCU Code Of Student Conduct even when abroad.
- Behavioral Expectations for all program participants should be clearly stated:
  - Consider creating your own program code of conduct, which may be stricter (but not more lenient) than JCU's.
  - Discuss consequences for misconduct with students. Talk about the 3 stages: verbal warning, written warning (copy to CGE), dismissal (discuss with CGE beforehand).
  - In particularly severe cases of misconduct, stages 1 and 2 may be skipped and immediate dismissal imposed.
  - Always check student judicial history as part of application process.
- Students are subject to host country laws and culturally acceptable standards of behavior!

# 8. Emergency Preparedness

- Be familiar with JCU Emergency Response Protocol & bring a copy of it with you.
- Know the key points & principles by heart!
- Know what sorts of emergencies can be expected (these vary by country).
- Discuss expectations for communication (illness, travel away from program site).
- Provide Emergency Contact numbers (wallet-sized card, available through CGE).
- Register with the U.S. Embassy ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)).

# 8. Emergency Preparation, cont.

- Create an Emergency Action Plan with your students upon arrival:
  - Discuss the potential crises that could occur in your area.
  - Designate a student leader in case the program leaders are incapacitated or unavailable.
  - Designate a primary and a secondary meeting place.
    - Agree on when and where to meet (residence halls, public building, landmark).
    - Talk about alternative methods of communication if a physical meeting does not or can not take place.
    - Be sure to also check in with the Center for Global Education as soon as possible.

## 9. On-site Orientation – Review Basic Needs

- How to call home.
- Area map (ATMs, pharmacy, grocery store).
- Conduct neighborhood walking tour ASAP.
- Safety: review emergency numbers.
- Use local resources, e.g. a police officer, to talk about crime and safety to the students.
- Health: what to do in case of illness and where to go for medical services .
- Remind students to review pre-departure orientation materials.
- Remind students of code of conduct.

# Program Leader Communication Resources:

- Copy of the Emergency Response Protocol.
- 24 hour contact information for students (phone and address), local contact person, JCU; wallet sized card with all numbers can be supplied by CGE. Be sure to provide all information.
- Local equivalent of “911.”
- US Embassy contact information (phone and address).
- Health Information for students.
- US Emergency contact information for students/participants

# U.S Government Resources

## U.S. State Department

- [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) (country information sheets, travel alerts, travel warnings, etc.)

## U.S. Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC – reports and analyzes overseas safety and security events)

- [www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov)

## U.S. Centers for Disease Control (information on health issues including immunization recommendations)

- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)