

Associated Colleges of the Midwest

Parent Handbook



2018 – 2019

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Introduction

Congratulations on your student's acceptance into an off-campus study program through the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM). ACM is a consortium of 14 liberal arts colleges in the Midwest; its members are Beloit, Carleton, Coe, Colorado, Cornell, Grinnell, Knox, Lake Forest, Luther, Macalester, Monmouth, Ripon, and St. Olaf colleges, and Lawrence University. As a consortium, ACM administers a portfolio of off-campus study programs on behalf of its member with academic and student service standards comparable to those of the ACM college home campuses. Many ACM programs are also open to students from other colleges and universities, and some of those institutions choose to affiliate with particular ACM off-campus study programs to provide even greater benefits to their students.

Students' off-campus study experiences have the potential to become the highlight of their undergraduate careers, and it is ACM's goal to make the opportunity both personally enriching and intellectually engaging. Studying off-campus can be demanding and at times frustrating; however, it can also be exhilarating and rewarding.

We applaud you for supporting your students' decision to study off-campus. Only a small percentage of U.S. students take advantage of the opportunity to live and study off-campus during their undergraduate years and your support for their doing so is an important component of their success. ACM's role in this is, in part, to prepare students (and their parents/guardians) for a positive experience. We can work together to encourage the academic and personal growth that lie at the heart of off-campus study.

This handbook is designed to provide answers to some of the many questions you may have begun to ask about participation in an ACM program – how finances will work, what the safety arrangements are, and how the credits will transfer. It is a general guidebook for parents/guardians of all students accepted into the ACM programs, regardless of a student's home college or program. More specific information for each program and location can be found in the student handbook or at the [ACM website](#).

The ACM and Off-Campus Study

The ACM was established over 55 years ago, and throughout its existence, off-campus study has been integral to its mission, which reads:

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest, a consortium of residential liberal arts colleges, aims to strengthen its member colleges as leaders and exemplars in liberal arts education through significant, innovation, and sustainable collaborations. The ACM does this by:

- Fostering professional effectiveness of faculty and administrative leaders at member colleges;
- Providing exemplary liberal arts learning through off-campus studies;
- Promoting members' excellence in teaching and learning, especially as achieved through collaboration.

ACM member colleges endorse off-campus study for their students and see it as a vital part of the undergraduate curriculum. Internationalization and cultural understanding are critical elements in the curricula at ACM colleges, and our programs play a central role in promoting these.

ACM programs are typically small in size, similar to class sizes at the home colleges. Although the programs' goals vary, there are similarities among programs: each has dedicated on-site faculty and staff; each encourages active, discussion-based learning; and each promotes cultural immersion as an

important feature of the program. Most of the programs also incorporate homestays, independent research projects and/or organized field excursions as integral elements of the curriculum.

The ACM office is located in Chicago, and off-campus study programming and support is a significant portion of our work. We provide students and the off-campus study offices on the home campuses with information and advising about ACM programs and help students prepare to go off-campus after they have been accepted to a program. This support continues while students are on-site and includes managing any emergencies that may occur.

Academics

Courses, Credits and Grades

Students go off-campus as scholars and not as tourists, and the academic experience shapes the core of their time away from campus. Academic work completed through participation in an ACM program is recorded on the individual student's academic record at his or her home campus. Although each campus sets its own policies regarding off-campus study programs, students from ACM colleges (and ACM affiliate institutions) who participate in ACM programs remain fully enrolled at their home campuses, and the courses and credits taken off-campus count toward graduation credit. At many ACM schools, students are required to meet with their advisors as soon as they are accepted into a program to determine how the program courses can be used to fulfill their various college requirements and to ensure that the credits are appropriate for their individual academic program. After the off-campus study program has been completed and a student's grades assigned, ACM reports the results to the registrar at the student's home campus so that these may be added to the student's academic record. This record will include the total number of credits assigned for the program, as well as the title, number of credits, and grade for each course the student has taken through the program.

Please note that ACM staff members may not discuss a student's academic performance with a parent without the student's permission. This policy is in accord with policies in place on all of ACM campuses regarding access to students' academic work and records. (For more information, please see the section titled "[Communication with ACM](#)")

ACM will bill students (through their home campus accounts) at the end of the program for outstanding program costs and any additional program expenses such as medical costs, damage to program housing or equipment, loss of keys or equipment, loans, etc. ACM is only able to release grades once payment for all expenses has been received and a student has completed all program and student conduct requirements.

Finances, Scholarships, and Financial Aid

The total amount students to participate in an off-campus study program varies from college to college, as does the availability of financial aid for off-campus study. These campus policies are often based on the specific curricular goals established at each college. Depending on the policies of your student's home college, charges for off-campus study may be based upon the program's cost, or may be based upon the college's own tuition. Additional tuition charges and/or fees for off-campus study are likely to apply at most colleges. These additional campus charges typically relate to expenses for academic support services and the awarding of academic credit and/or financial aid. Therefore, students should check with their off-campus study office and Financial Aid office to find out how their college charges students for ACM programs, what additional campus fees may apply, and how financial aid may be used toward the cost of their program.

ACM will bill the student's home college directly for all fees for off-campus study. These costs consists of two elements: education costs and a program fee. The latter typically covers housing, on-site orientation, special program activities, and some meals. Please note that the specific items covered by the program fee may vary among the programs, and it does NOT include airfare and personal expenses. A detailed breakdown of program costs, including estimates of those expenses not covered by the educational and program fees, is available on the [ACM Cost](#) pages. These costs are based on what past students have reported they have spent while on the program. The cost page clarifies which costs are included in the program fee and which are separate, additional expenses. In some cases, as indicated on the cost page, we can only provide estimates (e.g., for airfare or food). Keep in mind that expenses abroad may be greater or less than the estimates as exchange rates rise or fall and may vary based upon each students' spending habits.

All students are required to pay a \$50 non-refundable deposit to the ACM to secure their place in the program; this deposit then is credited to the program fee which the ACM bills to the college. The deposit can be paid online at www.acm.edu/deposit.

For students participating in the ACM Chicago or Newberry programs, an additional \$200 refundable housing deposit is due along with the \$50 program deposit. The \$200 housing deposit will be returned at the end of the semester, minus any charges for damages or missing keys from the housing.

Until this deposit is received, the ACM is unable to reserve a student's place in the program. So that ACM staff can plan accordingly, students are asked to pay the deposit within two weeks of acceptance notification. It is not possible to return deposits to students who withdraw from the program after being accepted. If a student does withdraw, ACM will bill the home campus for any fees. Please refer to the [ACM Cancellation Policy](#) on withdrawals for additional information, including a fee schedule.

Preparing for Study Abroad

Pre-departure Requirements and Orientation

In preparation for their time off-campus, students receive a program-specific handbook, a pre-departure checklist, and information about visa requirements, program dates, and other program-specific arrangements. They are also expected to participate in a program-specific arrangements. They are also expected to participate in a program-specific online orientation with ACM staff, program faculty or director, program alums, and other accepted students. (This will be in addition to more general pre-departure meetings at the home campuses at most schools).

Students will also be required to complete online pre-departure modules. Students will learn how the program operates, what they need to do to prepare for the program, what is expected of them in terms of academics, and how best to represent themselves in a new culture and as a student abroad (for international programs). Students will also have a chance to think about their personal and academic goals for the semester. ACM staff will discuss with students the safety measures for their particular program and program location. Information about safety, local arrangements, and various on-site activities will be covered again in an orientation meeting when students first arrive at the program site.

For some international program destinations, students will be required to receive additional immunizations in advance of departure. It is each student's responsibility to consult with their personal physician or campus clinic to review the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) which are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

Passports and Visas

Students studying abroad must have a passport to travel, and we require students to provide the ACM with a copy of their passport photo page. Students who already have passports need to verify that they will be valid for the entire times they are abroad. Some countries require that passports be valid for a specific length of time after the program end-date, some for as much as six months beyond the proposed return date. Visa requirements vary from one country to another, as well as by length and purpose of stay. Students will be given more information after acceptance about what the visa requirements and the process.

For most programs, students are responsible for obtaining their own visas with the information and supporting documents ACM provides. If a student is an international student studying in the US and planning to participate in a study abroad program, there might be additional visa requirements and the ACM will do its best to work with the individual student to provide information so the student can obtain their visa.

Travel

The ACM does not make travel arrangements for program participants. We suggest that students make reservations as soon as they commit to a program as it is generally easier to obtain less expensive plane fares. The program dates are published on the ACM website as well as in the program checklists, but are subject to change based on varying factors out of ACM's control (i.e. change in academic calendar at partner institutions). At some program sites, ACM will recommend a few flights for students to arrive on to help ease the airport transfer process. At other sites, students are required to get themselves from the airport or train station to the designated meeting point for the program (usually a hotel). Students are required to arrive at the program site on (or before, at their own expense) the official program start dates and departs on or after the end date. The ACM makes no accommodation for late arrivals or early departures. Students are responsible for any lodging, food, airport transfers or other expenses resulting from early arrival or late departure from their program site.

We recommend that students planning to extend their time abroad through additional travel time in either the country of the program or elsewhere first verify the particular details of any applicable visas before making flight arrangements. ACM staff can provide information about visas required for the countries where our programs are located, but cannot offer specific visa advice or services.

Reading and Viewing

As a way of understanding (and following) your student's experience while off-campus, you may wish to learn more about the program location through newspapers, books, films and online articles. ACM's program handbooks often contain reading and viewing suggestions for students and you may also wish to investigate these materials. They often can convey a picture of life at the program site that a program manual cannot. Please keep in mind, however, that they are not necessarily perfect representations, any more than films and television programs such as "Jersey Shore", "Real Housewives" or "Animal House" accurately depict typical American life.

Recommended Information File

ACM recommends that students and parents/guardians work together in advance of the students' program to compile a folder of important information that might be helpful during the student's absence. This file might include resources such as:

- Copies of passport, visa (if applicable), credit and debit cards, flight information and lodging information.

- Copies of student's CISI insurance card and information on how to file a claim (international programs)
- Contact information for ACM's Chicago Office and the ACM program site as well as the Off-Campus Study office of the student's home school.
- Any information you might need to file the student's taxes in their absence (for spring programs).
- Any information you might need to facilitate necessary processes with the home school (housing sign-up, registration, etc.)

Arrival and Getting Started

Arrival at the Program Site

Programs vary in terms of arrival procedures. Students on some programs will be met at the airport by ACM staff, staff or a partner organization/university or their homestay family. Students on some other programs are required to navigate the airport to their housing or program location before meeting staff. Specific instructions for each program can be found in the student handbook and communicated to students via email two weeks before departure.

Programs begin with a required orientation session. This initial meeting is critical for students as it is the first time they meet the program director, staff and fellow students face-to-face. During the orientation, the Director will review the academic requirements for the program, housing arrangements and expectations, appropriate behavior, safety guidelines, actions that students can take to facilitate their own safety and emergency procedures and contact information.

Flexibility and Patience

We always encourage our students to approach the start of their program with flexibility and patience. Arrangements change and sometimes we have to adapt our schedule to forces outside our control like delayed arrival flights, lost luggage or host country transportation strikes. Some aspects of the program will always be somewhat different than what a students may have anticipated or expected in advance. We ask our students to be flexible and adapt with us, and they will likely find that remaining flexible will serve them well throughout their time abroad.

Patience is also important because students and their peers will be adjusting to new living and learning environments, and sometimes it takes some time for individuals to figure out how they're going to manage those differences. How someone reacts an hour after getting off a long plane ride in an unknown place might be very different from how they react after catching up on some rest and getting some basic needs addressed like unpacking and eating. We encourage students to be wary of making snap judgements about their peers, but also to be patient with themselves as they seek to understand and adjust to their new environment.

Culture Shock

During the first weeks in which students arrive on site, it is not uncommon for them to experience culture shock, surprise, dismay, and even anxiety at the cultural differences in the new location and in the unfamiliar situations in which they find themselves. The on-site orientation is intended to help ease this adjustment. Students can and do adapt to the new situations in a surprisingly short time. Finding themselves able to settle in and adjust independently to a new environment is a component of easing culture shock.

Research as shown that many students go through a three-step adjustment process in acclimating to their new environment. In the first stage, they are likely to be excited and entranced by the novelty of being in a new location and delighted with most things around them. Everything is fantastic about the new location and students may think to themselves: “why do we have this back home?” In the second stage, after the initial “euphoria” has worn off, they may focus on the ways in which everything is different or “foreign.” The tendency is to highlight the differences and compare them unfavorably to things at home – the food is bad, the computer facilities are inferior, services are badly organized, etc. They may experience some cultural misunderstandings, they may miss friends and family, and they may even call to say they want to come home. During the third stage, their view of home and their program location is more nuanced – they are likely to take a more analytical approach to both locations and to find good and bad things in each. They will likely have learned to approach their new environment with a critical eye and establish favorite places in their new location.

As a primary support person for your student, you may hear, early and often, what your son or daughter is experiencing and thinking. We very much hope that you will provide them with the support and encouragement they need as they learn about their program location and the new context in which they find themselves. There are times when they will want to talk about their frustrations but we encourage you to try to focus on the positive and ask your son or daughter what is going well and what they are enjoying. Your positivity can help turn negative feelings around.

Communications

Communication with your Student

With cell phones, email and social media so widely used, many students and parents are accustomed to instant communication. Parents/guardians sometimes request their children contact them immediately upon their arrival at the program site and when they fail to call or email within 24 hours, some parents/guardians may become concerned. Please be patient. ACM ask all Program Directors to notify us of students’ safe arrival and we in turn email this information to students’ emergency contacts. If your student does not arrive on her or his scheduled flight, ACM will contact you.

If your student is delayed in route to the program site and has contacted you, please call ACM with an update on their arrival information. You can find ACM contact information the last page of this handbook, as well as on the website.

During the first few days of the program, as students get settled into their housing and are engaged with the orientation sessions, students may not have instant access to quick communication. While the ACM is glad to assist in getting a message to the program site in such situations, our experience is that the first 24 to 48 hours are quite busy and students are often unable to get to a computer to send a message or find a telephone from which to call. You can expect that your son or daughter will contact you as n as he or she is able.

Email and social media use are a simple way to stay in touch wand minimizes the problems caused by time differences and individual schedules. Access to internet (and wi-fi) vary depending on the program site so students should expect they will not have internet as they are accustomed to at home or on their home campus. For students living in home-stays, they should not expect to have internet at home. That being said, there are various ways to access internet, including purchasing of mobile internet devices or using data on a smartphone.

Most students have a cell phone while abroad. ACM encourages all students to have and carry a working local cell phone. At the beginning of the program, students are required to provide the Program Director with their local number, or the best number to be contacted on. Students can bring

an unlocked American cell phone and purchase a local SIM card with pre-paid data and credit to make phone calls and access the internet. Other options include purchasing a phone on-site or switching their American phone to an international plan (although this is very expensive over the course of a semester).

Many countries use Whatsapp (WeChat in China) as a primary means of communication (both texting, phone and video calls). We encourage you to discuss with your son or daughter how you will communicate and how often so that both of you have a mutual understanding of what is expected.

The immediacy of cell phone and email communications is not without its hazards. Perhaps chief among these is when a student's regular (or daily) communications with parents, friends or a significant others back home interferes with the student's acculturation or time to make connections at the program location. While ACM acknowledges the support that parents, guardians, and home networks can provide students during the transition to a new setting, students must also have their freedom and ability to immerse themselves in their new environment in order to learn from the place as well as their coursework.

Because students are encountering unfamiliar situations and may be unsure how to conduct themselves or assess specific situations, it is not unusual for them to call their parents/guardians to share their concerns before they have had a chance to analyze the situation and discuss the problem with the on-site staff. Parents/guardians may hear negative comments that reflect immediate reactions or frustrations that students encounter as a typical stage of acclimating to a new environment and cultural setting. At times, students may complain that "no one is helping" or that what they remember as being promised has not materialized. As a first step, the ACM strongly recommends students discuss the problem with the on-site staff, who are likely to have the best perspective on the situation. This is what we recommend to students, and it is often all that is necessary to resolve a problem. Learning how to problem-solve in a new environment is an important element of the personal growth experienced through off-campus study.

Communication with ACM

Parents of students participating in ACM's programs often have questions about specific activities or events during the time their sons or daughters are off-campus. Please direct your concerns or inquiries to the ACM Chicago office rather than attempting to contact ACM staff on-site.

Communicating directly with faculty or staff on-site can be very difficult given the busy program schedule and significant time difference for some locations. The ACM Off-Campus Programs team welcomes parents phone calls to our offices in Chicago during regular business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (central time). If it is after-hours emergency, an automated message will give you instructions on how to contact an ACM staff member. Our contact information is included at the end of this handbook.

Please be aware that the ACM is prohibited from releasing certain information to anyone with the expressed permission of the student. In accordance with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), a student's education records are maintained as confidential by the ACM and, except for a limited number of special circumstances listed in that law, will not be released to a third party without the student's prior written consent. FERPA regulations do allow ACM to release limited "directory information" at any time, without obtaining the prior consent of the student. The ACM does not provide directory information to third parties for commercial purposes. The ACM has determined that the following student information is considered directory information:

- Name

- College/university
- Email address
- Off-Campus study program
- Semester/term of off-campus study
- Awards, honors

Students can sign a release form to give parents or others access to protected information. Having a release form on file does not mean the information will automatically be shared with parents or other authorized designees; information will be made available upon request from the authorized third party. The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for overseeing FERPA. For more information, see their FERPA website at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

In most cases, the ACM will not contact parents to provide medical, academic or disciplinary information without the student's permission. IN the case of an extreme emergency, where student's health is in jeopardy or if there is a concern that the student poses a threat to themselves or others, the ACM will contact the student's listed emergency contact. As a general guideline, however, if a student is able to communicate about the situation, the ACM believes it is up to the student to decide whether, how and when to discuss the particular situation with parents and others.

In certain circumstances (ex. natural disaster near program site, terrorist attack or student strike) ACM might contact the parents/guardians of the students to update them on the situation.

ACM Communication with Home Campuses

ACM staff members strive to maintain high levels of communication with all campuses sending students on any of our programs. Because colleges have different requirements for reporting or documenting incidents, ACM staff will communicate any reportable incident to the Off-Campus Study Director at the students' home campus.

In situations where an incident impacts multiple students on a program (ex. Illness not limited to a single individual, major program changes, etc.), ACM staff will notify all home campuses represented on that program of the situation in a way that does not identify specific students. Exceptions to components of this program will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Health and Safety

Health

The best advice we can give our students about staying healthy during study abroad is to continue to do the things that keep them healthy at home. Maintaining exercise levels, getting appropriate amounts of sleep, and following routine practices like hand-washing are the best day-to-day strategies to stay healthy. While on study abroad is not the time for students to experiment with changes to their lifestyle, sleeping, or medication habits. Additionally, we suggest students remain patient and give themselves and their bodies time to adjust to their new environment which may include differences in time zones, time of the day for meals, types of food available, ambient noise while sleeping, and consistent access to electricity or internet service.

Safety During Off-Campus Study

Our first guiding principle regarding our off-campus programs is concern for the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff. For this reason, we monitor conditions at our program sites before and during students' time abroad and provide students with safety information they will need to know while

abroad. Should conditions at a program site deteriorate to threaten students' safety, the ACM will take the appropriate steps to place students out of harm's way.

When informing students about safety at program sites, our practice is to repeat the information early and often. Safety issues are addressed in the program-specific on-line orientation before students leave campus, reiterated during on-site orientation when students first arrive, and discussed in students' program handbooks. Directors and other on-site staff also meet with students periodically and when warranted during their time abroad. Before a travel break, for example, when students often travel away from their off-campus study site, directors may meet with students to review guidelines for safer travel (including such suggestions as avoiding known gathering places of U.S. citizens or students; avoiding public protests or demonstrations; not drawing attention to themselves as U.S. students; and traveling with one or two other students but not as a pack).

It is important to emphasize to students that even in a new setting with specific local concerns, the most significant safety risks they may face while off-campus are the same risks they face on their home campuses – alcohol and traffic related accidents and injuries. For those students studying abroad, laws and customs relating to alcohol consumption and driving can be significantly different and students to be cautious and alert. The ACM prohibits students from operating any motorized vehicles, and this restriction is outlined in the [Off-Campus Study Contract and Comprehensive Release](#) that each student signs. Public transportation, such as trains and buses, is far more reliable in most areas – and even superior to what is found in some US cities. Similarly, although we cannot regulate or prohibit students' consumption of alcohol during their free time within the program, we urge them to observe local customs of alcohol use. In most countries, public or private drunkenness is frowned upon. We also emphasize that their judgement is impaired while intoxicated and that they may be ill-equipped to evaluate the risks of dangerous situations.

For all of ACM's program sites, the process of monitoring conditions at the program location is ongoing. In gathering and evaluating information about safety and related concerns, the ACM is in contact with program directors and other on-site staff, U.S. Department of State officials, and other off-campus study professionals as well as monitoring daily bulletins from the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) and numerous local and international news sources. We review information to assess not only security conditions and safety risks in a given country, but also potential medical risks, crime and other threats such as natural disasters which may result in cancellation of a program. This monitoring continues as long as students are abroad. If conditions warrant, the ACM will relocate or cancel a program and make the necessary arrangements for bringing students home as quickly as possible.

All international program participants are required to register with the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov>. This is a free program run by the U.S. Department of State through which students will receive information about their location from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. The program also allows the State Department to better assist in case of an emergency.

Medical Insurance & Facilities, Medications, and On-Going Conditions

International Programs

ACM provides health insurance coverage for all students participating in its international programs. This coverage is through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI), a reputable company with extensive experience and excellent service in providing health coverage for students abroad. (The only exception is the Jordan program, where ACM's partner AMIDEAST provides similar coverage through CISI.)

The policy with CISI provides a broad range of coverage for students' medical treatment while abroad. Among the features of the policy are:

- Coverage for both medically-necessary physician office visits and hospitalization (but not routine medical examinations);
- No exclusion for mental disorders or alcohol-related accidents or illnesses;
- Coverage for prescription drugs
- No exclusion for pre-existing conditions (except in the case of pregnancies beginning before the start of the program);
- Medical evacuation coverage; and
- No deductible.

The policy covers students from the day before the start of the program through the day after the program ends, and thus includes the time to travel to and from the program. The coverage is valid not only in the host country, but also for any travel to another country during the inclusive dates of the program – e.g., during program breaks.

In some cases, CISI can provide payment for medical expenses in advance of treatment. However, students should expect to make payment at the time of treatment and then submit their full costs with receipts for a quick and convenient reimbursement by CISI. ACM will bill the student and/or the student's family for any incurred medical expenses or related costs (e.g., for transportation to the medical facility or payment of services by the Program Director).

The policy, however, should NOT replace any coverage students have in the U.S., nor should students (or their parents/guardians if they are the policy holder) discontinue their U.S. health insurance coverage. The insurance provides only limited amounts of coverage for follow-up treatment of illnesses and injuries which begin while students are abroad.

The cost of the coverage is included in the program fee, and ACM will complete the initial registration for the insurance. It is also possible for students to independently purchase additional coverage to extend the dates of coverage in the situation where students may choose to travel internationally outside the program dates. The cost of this additional coverage is approximately \$10/week. Students will receive a welcome letter and an ID card via email about a month before the start of the program; the welcome letter will describe how to log on to the CISI website to view the tools available to policy holders and to purchase any additional coverage.

Please remember that medical insurance does not cover personal property. You may wish to purchase insurance for loss or theft of personal property such as laptops and cameras.

Domestic Programs

Accessibility to health and medical care is a major concern. You should consult with your insurance company to determine where your child should go in the event they need medical care. In case of an emergency, students can go to the emergency room of the hospital nearest their apartment. We encourage students to bring an insurance card with them if possible and identify a provider covered by their insurance plan BEFORE they arrive in Chicago. ACM does not provide health insurance for students who are participating in any off-campus study program based in the United States.

Please remember that medical insurance does not cover personal property. You may wish to purchase insurance for loss or theft of personal property such as laptops and cameras.

Medications and On-Going Conditions

If a student is taking prescribed medication, the ACM recommends that, if at all possible, the student bring enough medicine for the entire time abroad. In order to avoid problems when clearing security and customs, all prescription and over-the-counter drugs should be kept in their original containers and properly labeled. It may also be useful for the student to carry the original prescription and to know the generic or Latin name of the prescription so that an equivalent version of the drug can be located in emergencies.

Some on-going medical conditions may require treatment while off-campus. The ACM urges students to take copies of their medical records to be shared with medical professionals should the need arise. In addition, it is important for the ACM and on-site staff to be informed in advance about such medical conditions, particularly those conditions which may require special accommodations in housing, diet, or academic arrangements. The ACM encourages students to completely and accurately fill out the Medical History and Emergency Contacts Form so that ACM staff can help arrange appropriate medical and/or mental health resources. Without detailed information, ACM preparation for individual student needs may cause challenges with pre-arrangement of appropriate services.

Please note that not all medical conditions can be accommodated at every program site and that, in certain situations, it may be necessary to seek an alternative program for a student.

Policies and Additional Travel

ACM Program Rules and Policies

The ACM has a listing of student expectations, policies, and responsibilities that apply to all program participants. These policies are available on our website at <http://www.acm.edu/policies>. Other policies that apply to particular program locations will be noted in the specific student handbook for that program or will be outlined during the initial on-site orientation.

Each ACM program participant is also expected to read and sign the ACM Off-Campus Study Contract and Comprehensive Release Form which outlines expectations for student health and safety, student behavior, financial obligations, and more.

Additional Travel While Studying Off-Campus

Students are often eager to visit as much of their host city or program region as they can while studying off-campus. And while we are delighted for them to do so, we also wish to emphasize that off-campus study is an academic activity, for which they will be earning credits and grades. Absences from on-site orientation, classes, or exams will be reflected in student grades. It is not appropriate for students to miss classes in order to travel, and we strongly urge them (and hope you will too) to confine their travel to weekends and program breaks. ACM does not intentionally plan course schedules to facilitate student travel.

Similarly, if you plan to visit the program site, your trip should coincide with an academic break or occur before or after the program dates. This also means that you should not plan to visit the program during the initial on-site orientation period. We ask you to keep in mind that students are expected to remain at the program site until the end of the program—it is not possible to arrange final exam dates to accommodate students' travel interests, or, except in emergency situations, to allow them to return home early.

Thinking Ahead

Re-Entry

When they return from studying off-campus, students may have mixed feelings about sharing their experiences with family and friends. Their experiences, even for a domestic program, may have been intense and exhilarating. They are often eager to convey the flavor and detail of this experience with those closest to them. For many students, off-campus study has been a transformative experience, both intellectually and personally, and they want those around them to be aware of the importance of their time off-campus. As one returned student remarked, “I can’t begin to tell you how different I am from who I was when I left campus.”

Communicating those intense experiences can be a bit of a challenge for many students, especially at first. When they have just returned to home or their home campus, students may be able only to say: “It was great!” Many students need some time to reflect before they can encapsulate their experience coherently. Some find tools like journaling or blogging helpful while others may try to return to previous patterns of daily living. Patience from their support network can be very helpful for students trying to find their voice.

Some students, even those who have studied in the United States, may note that the adjustment to life back on campus presents its own “reverse culture shock”. This may be expressed as criticism of their home culture, a certain distance from friends and family, or simple homesickness for what they left behind. All of this may continue for a number of months. In time, students generally find ways to reflect upon the experience, integrate it into their lives, and, perhaps, make significant choices about the direction they will take in life based upon the experience. The single most important contribution you can make to this readjustment process is to listen. Students who experience reverse culture shock in its strongest form report that they find it hard to describe their time away to family and friends, who are seldom willing to take the time to listen to what they have to say.

A Final Note

One of the exciting features of off-campus study is the extent to which this experience enriches and broadens students’ perspectives of themselves, their home, and the rest of the world. For parents/guardians, it’s a time to let your student learn about and adapt to new situations—new people, new foods, new communities. The learning process is not always tidy, and there will undoubtedly be times when your son or daughter is dismayed or disappointed and wants to share this with you as much as the good times. This, too, is part of the intellectual and personal growth that is at the heart of studying off-campus.

The ACM takes great pride in our programs and their role in undergraduate education. We work hard to provide the necessary support to make this experience as fulfilling as we can for all of our students.

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