



# STUDENT HANDBOOK

**PLANNING GUIDE**

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OFF-CAMPUS STUDY &  
EXCHANGES

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SKIDMORE COLLEGE

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# INTRODUCTION



Congratulations on choosing to study off-campus! All of us in the office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges are here to help support you as you prepare yourself to spend a semester or year off campus. This will be a team effort but the main person responsible for being prepared is you, the student – the person that gets to have this transformative experience. We will provide you with information and guidance and remain here for you as you have questions or if you run into issues. We expect that you will read the items we give you and that you will stay in communication with us.

You have access to your Skidmore MyOCSE portal and this is where you will have already read many of our policies and have signed that you agree to them. This document is another place for us to outline some of those same policies as well as share with you important things you should be considering and planning for before your departure.

In addition to this document, we will also be sending you weekly pre-departure emails starting around the time we hold our in-person pre-departure orientation (November for spring programs and April for fall programs). If you gave us permission to speak to your parent/legal guardian, we will also send them a family-focused version of these pre-departure emails. Again, it's a team effort.

# CHECKLISTS

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There is a lot to do before you spend a semester off campus and a lot to research and think about. We've created these checklists to help you know what questions you should be asking your program provider or your support structure at home to help make you as prepared as possible, before you study off campus. As always, reach out to Off-Campus Study & Exchanges for assistance leading up to your departure.

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE CAMPUS - STEPS TO COMPLETE

### COMPLETING APPLICATION & APPROVAL PROCESS

- Submit all of your post-acceptance items to OCSE
- Confirm your participation with Skidmore by submitting the \$500 non-refundable deposit
- Apply directly to your program by their deadline
- Read all of the pre-departure emails and materials provided by OCSE
- Attend the mandatory in-person pre-departure meeting run by OCSE
- Maintain good academic, social and financial standing with the College so that you remain eligible to study off campus.

### COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR PROGRAM

- Submit all required items for your program (health forms, course registration, housing preferences, passport details, etc.)
- If studying abroad, confirm if you will need a visa to enter the country. This process can take months to complete, so do not wait to find this out and begin the process.

### PREPARING TO LEAVE CAMPUS

- Meet with your faculty advisor to discuss the courses you will take the semester you return so that you're ready to register when the time comes.
- Provide the mail room with a forwarding address in the U.S. for the semester you will be off campus.
- Return all library books and pay all parking tickets and library fines.

# CHECKLISTS

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## BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE - QUESTIONS TO ASK

### ACADEMICS

- What is the course registration process on your program?
- Do you enroll before you arrive or once you're on-site?
- What is the attendance policy?
- What is the academic calendar?

### MONEY MANAGEMENT

- What is your budget for the semester?
- Have you discussed your budget and money management with your parents/guardians?
- What is the currency in your host country and what's the exchange rate?
- Have you called your credit card company or bank to let them know you'll be traveling with the card?
- Is cash or credit cards more widely used where you'll be living?
- Does the program recommend you arrive with some cash in that currency?

### SAFETY

- Are there any public safety concerns you should be aware of in your host country and city?
- What are the laws around alcohol and cannabis?
- Have you registered for the STEP program yet?
- Where is the nearest US Embassy to where you'll be living?

### HEALTH

- Are you up-to-date on your annual physical? Dental checkup? Vision exam?
- Do you take any medications?
  - Are you able to take enough medication with you for the entire semester (recommended) and, if not, do you have a plan on how you will refill the prescription abroad?
  - Are any of your prescription medications illegal in the country you're going to or not readily available if you were to run out or lose your medication?
  - Have you consulted with your physician about alternative medications, if this is the case?
- Do you need to get any immunizations in order to travel to your host country?

# CHECKLISTS

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## INSURANCE

- In addition to the Skidmore international insurance, does your program provide you with medical insurance?
- Do you understand how this plan will work?
- Do you need to sign up for it?

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

- Does your program offer a group flight or preferred flight?
- What date/time do you need to arrive?
- Will someone meet you at the airport or do you make your own way to your housing/program center?
- Do you have the instructions on where to go?

## PACKING

- Did your program provide you with a packing list?
- Do you know the weight and size limit for luggage on your flight(s)?

## HOUSING

- Have you received your housing assignment yet?
- Does your housing include meals or will you have access to a kitchen?
- How long is your commute to class?

## COMMUNICATING WITH HOME

- Have you made a plan on how much or little you would like to communicate with friends and family while you're off campus?
- Does your abroad program recommend you bring your current phone and get a SIM card or buy a disposable phone in-country?

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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Studying off campus is a privilege that is available to students who have demonstrated the ability to adjust academically and emotionally to college, and who are ready to benefit from the challenges of off-campus study. Only students in good academic, financial, and social standing are eligible to study off campus. The Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) reserves the right to withdraw students from their respective programs if they do not meet these conditions.

Students studying off campus on Approved Programs, either Skidmore or non-Skidmore Programs, are expected to adhere to the same social and academic policies in place at Skidmore College. Students who break Skidmore's Code of Conduct, Skidmore's Honor Code and/or the code of conduct while off-campus may face disciplinary action by their off-campus study program and Skidmore College. Students who face disciplinary action may be responsible for sanctions imposed by Skidmore College in addition to those applied by the program. In the case of conflict among policies the more stringent policy shall apply. Students are responsible for understanding Skidmore College's Honor Code, Code of Conduct, social and academic policies as well as any Code of Conduct in place by their program provider

## PREPARING TO GO

If you are studying outside of the U.S. or will be traveling internationally as part of your off-campus study program, there is quite a bit to do before you depart. Aside from the different issues you need to consider (health, safety, finances), there are some very practical items you need to handle for international travel as well.

### PASSPORTS

If you're studying or traveling outside the United States, you'll need a valid U.S. passport. It must remain valid for at least six months beyond the end date of your program. If your passport expires sooner, renew it as soon as possible.

First-time applicants must apply in person at an authorized passport acceptance facility. The application process typically takes four to six weeks, though you can pay an additional fee to expedite it. Application forms, instructions, and current processing times are available at [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov).

Students at Skidmore can apply locally at the Saratoga Springs Post Office (245 Washington St., 518-584-1545). If you're elsewhere, check [usps.com](https://usps.com) to find the nearest passport office.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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In many countries, a passport isn't enough—you may also need a visa to legally study there.

A visa is official permission from a foreign government to enter, stay, and study for a set period. It's often a stamp or sticker in your passport, though some countries issue electronic visas.

**Without the correct visa, you could be denied entry at the border or withdrawn from your program.**

Your program provider will share visa instructions specific to your country. Requirements vary widely by location, so it's essential to start early and follow all instructions carefully.

## Plan ahead and apply early

- *Check visa requirements* with your provider or the host country's consulate.
- *Start the application process ASAP.* Visa processing can take anywhere from a few days to a few months.
- *You'll need a valid passport* to apply. If you don't have one yet, apply immediately.
- *Some consulates will hold your passport* during processing—this may impact your ability to travel before the program starts.

## Traveling during your time abroad

If you plan to visit other countries during breaks or weekends:

- *Research visa requirements* for each destination before leaving the U.S.
- U.S. citizens can typically travel to many European countries for short stays without a visa, but this is *not guaranteed*.
- Requirements change frequently. Consult the consulate websites of the countries you plan to visit.

## Entering and exiting a country

You'll go through **Customs and Immigration** when you arrive and again when you depart.

- **Immigration** verifies that you are authorized to stay in the country (e.g., with a valid student visa).
- **Customs** regulates the items you bring into and out of the country—be honest, especially about food, alcohol, or large purchases.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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When you return to the U.S.:

- You'll go through U.S. Customs at your port of entry.
- Most travelers can bring up to \$800 worth of goods duty-free, but this can vary.
- Keep your receipts if you're buying more expensive gifts or souvenirs.



# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### MAINTAINING OFF-CAMPUS STUDY ELIGIBILITY

Only students in good academic, financial, and social standing are eligible to study off campus. Participation in an off-campus study program is contingent upon maintaining a good academic, financial, and social standing at Skidmore College. **If your cumulative GPA falls below a 2.75 or if your social standing changes dramatically, OCSE reserves the right to withdraw you from your program.**

### CREDITS AND GRADES

Skidmore students may participate in two types of programs – Skidmore Programs or Non-Skidmore Approved Programs. Each has a different process as far as credits and grades are concerned. Please read the section below that applies to the specific type of program you will be participating on next semester.

#### Skidmore Programs

- Credits count as **Skidmore courses and credits**.
- **Grades appear on your transcript and are factored into your GPA.**
- **Pre-approval required** for courses counting toward majors/minors and maturity level credit.

#### Approved Programs

- **Credits count as transfer credit**
- **All courses must be taken for a grade** (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading is not accepted).
- **A grade of C or better is required for the credit to transfer.**
- **Grades do NOT appear on your Skidmore transcript and are NOT factored into your GPA.** The name of the classes you took will be listed.
- **Pre-approval required** for courses counting toward **majors/minors and maturity level credit.**

If you are a non-Skidmore student participating on a Skidmore program, you will receive a Skidmore College transcript at the end of your program. Please check with your home campus for details regarding transfer of credits and grades.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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A note about transcripts: Many students find they need official transcripts from their overseas universities when they apply for graduate or law schools or any number of other things. Skidmore cannot get you an official transcript from your host university. Therefore, we suggest that you request, at the end of your program, a number of official, sealed transcripts from the host university. (They will send them to you after the program ends.) These documents may be difficult to get after you depart your program, and, again, OCSE cannot get them for you.

You may not receive credit for any cultural cuisine or food and wine courses taken off campus. You also must be mindful of the level of language course and the Skidmore equivalent for ALL courses that are taken off campus. Students may not repeat the same level language course off-campus, if they have already completed coursework at that level towards their degree at Skidmore. Students will not receive ANY credit for courses they have already taken or received credit for on campus. All courses should be pre-approved by the relevant department at Skidmore before registering for any courses on-site.

## REGISTERING FOR COURSES

### Course Load

Each program will have its own policies and procedures for registering for courses, including what they consider to be a minimum course load and credit requirement. What all Skidmore students must keep in mind is that Skidmore expects you to register for a full course load. This is different from having full-time status. A full course load means that you must take the same number of classes that a student at your host university would be expected to take, which is generally equivalent to 15 credits at Skidmore. If the local students take 5 courses, you must take 5 courses. You must also take enough classes to maintain the equivalent of at least 12 credits for your semester off campus. This is typically not a problem. However, you must be sure you understand how half-credits and non-US credit system conversions work. Please check with your program provider to be sure you understand the exact number of credits that are expected.

### Course Changes

No matter what type of program you are on, all of your courses must be pre-approved. If your course selections change while you are studying off campus – especially courses going toward your major, minor or other requirements – you MUST inform the appropriate chair and OCSE of the changes right away.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## **Dropping a course**

If you are considering dropping or withdrawing from a course, you should contact OCSE ([ocse@skidmore.edu](mailto:ocse@skidmore.edu)) immediately. You must have permission from OCSE and your program provider to drop a course while studying off campus. Students will not be permitted to drop a course if the total enrollment falls below the required course load. Students must also adhere to the on-site deadlines for dropping or withdrawing from a course. Students should not follow the published deadlines for Skidmore campus when studying off campus.

If there is a personal or medical reason that forces you to drop below a full course load, you **MUST** receive approval from Skidmore's Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges in advance. You must contact OCSE before dropping any courses to ensure you maintain the proper number of credits.

## **Withdrawal from your off-campus study program**

No student should withdraw from a program without first consulting Off-Campus Study & Exchanges ([ocse@skidmore.edu](mailto:ocse@skidmore.edu)) and the program provider or coordinator of your program. If you do decide to withdraw from a program, it is your responsibility to notify OCSE via email, outlining the reason for your withdrawal and explaining whatever arrangements you have made with the onsite administration for finalizing your participation.

Based on your reasons and the date of your withdrawal, OCSE will consult the onsite staff and/or the program provider before determining how the credit for the semester will appear on your record (no credit, L, W, or F). Please contact OCSE regarding the refund policy, if applicable. Should you remain in the host city after you have withdrawn from the program, you will not have the privilege of program services and staff support.

If there is a personal or medical reason that forces you to withdraw from your program, you **MUST** receive approval from Skidmore's Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges and Office of Academic Advising in advance.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Skidmore College cultivates an inclusive and supportive learning community and values the diverse learning styles of our students. We are committed to providing students with disabilities meaningful access to off campus study and strive to provide individualized accommodations necessary for students when possible. Students are strongly encouraged to contact an OCSE Program Manager and Skidmore's Director of Accessibility Services as early as possible to discuss their needs for studying off campus.

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation when studying off campus, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Director of Accessibility Services, at Skidmore College and provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability that supports your request. The application form and documentation requirements are also available online at <http://www.skidmore.edu/accessibility/index.php>.

For further information, stop by the Learning Commons in Starbuck Center or call 518-580-8150.

Commonly requested academic accommodations include:

- Extended test time
- Test taking in a distraction reduced location
- Books in alternative format (electronic)
- Supplemental note taking
- Test reading
- Converted class and test materials (enlarged, recorded, etc.)

If the student's documentation is conclusive, the Director will work with the student to determine which accommodations requested are reasonable for the college setting and, in turn, off campus study. The Director will prepare a Memo of Academic Accommodations, which the student should share directly with their program provider.

Requests for accommodations and documentation should be provided to your off-campus study program as early as possible. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and every effort will be made to work collaboratively with eligible students to facilitate an accommodation. However, please keep in mind that in-country conditions and resources do vary by program site, and specific program locations have limited accessibility.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## REGISTERING FOR YOUR NEXT SEMESTER ON CAMPUS

All students studying off campus will register online just as if they were on campus. As soon as the schedule of classes has been finalized for next semester, you will receive an email at your Skidmore email address from the Registrar's office with instructions and reminders for the registration process. You can email any questions or concerns to [registrar@skidmore.edu](mailto:registrar@skidmore.edu). You may also access all of the information you need to register by logging on to the Registrar's home page at <http://www.skidmore.edu/registrar/>. Updated schedule information is normally available in mid-March for the fall term and mid-October for the spring term.

If you will not have access to the internet during your registration time slot, please contact the Registrar's office ahead of time to request they administratively register you for classes. This only applies to programs where there is no internet access. This does not apply to independent travel.

Don't forget to meet with your faculty advisor before you depart to discuss the courses you will need to take upon your return to campus.

## HOUSING AT SKIDMORE UPON YOUR RETURN

Our office will provide the Office of Residential Life with the names of all students studying off campus. They will communicate with you directly to learn your preferences for housing when you return to campus. If you have further questions, please contact the Office of Residential Life.

## EXTENDING YOUR STAY

Many students who plan to study off campus for only one semester enjoy it so much that they decide to stay for a second. If you'd like to extend your off-campus study, please contact OCSE immediately. We are always pleased to help a student extend their stay. Next, talk with your program provider to be sure that you understand their policies and procedures. You will then want to contact your faculty advisor at Skidmore to talk about the courses you will take during your second semester off campus. OCSE also suggests that you discuss your decision with your family at home.

If you wish to extend your off-campus study, you must seek approval from Skidmore College by contacting OCSE. At minimum, you will need to submit a new Proposed Course of Study form online for the term you wish to extend and get your faculty advisor's approval to extend. Of particular importance to the process is that you receive course pre-approval for the courses you plan to take. It's important to get your courses pre-approved so you can continue to graduate on time. OCSE may also ask you to submit a new online application for the term you'd like to extend.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## MONEY MATTERS

### PARTICIPANT FEES

Students on Skidmore and Approved Programs will be charged the Skidmore comprehensive fee for their semester or year off campus. This fee is equal to Skidmore tuition, on campus apartment rate at Skidmore, board if applicable, an off-campus study processing fee and required fees. (Students on an Approved Program are not charged the required fees.) Students will be billed by Skidmore's Bursar directly for the comprehensive fee. If your program does not include room and/or board, or only includes partial board, the fee will be adjusted accordingly. Please reference the Skidmore Bursar's website for current fees at <http://www.skidmore.edu/bursar/cost.php>.

#### *What does the Comprehensive Fee include?*

The Skidmore comprehensive fee covers costs for tuition and mandatory fees, standard program housing (double occupancy), board if applicable, supplemental international medical insurance, and any other mandatory program fees. Please note that unlimited meal plans are not available on off-campus study programs.

Students are responsible for: airfare, passport, visa and immigration costs if applicable, onsite transportation if not included in the Skidmore or provider's program fee, books, accommodation fees if not included in the provider's program fee, accommodation upgrades with supplemental fees, board if not included in the provider's program fee, voluntary field trips and excursions, refundable deposits, and personal expenses. Students are also responsible for their housing and board when participating in programs that do not include those items. The Skidmore Comprehensive fee will be adjusted accordingly in these cases.

#### *How is payment handled?*

Students will be billed by Skidmore's Bursar for the comprehensive fee. The bill will show one charge for the tuition portion of the program ("Tuition – Study Abroad"), a second charge titled "Other Fees – Study Abroad" for the room and board portion, and any additional mandatory Skidmore College fees. Payments are to be made to Skidmore College. Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will handle payments to the off-campus study program provider on the student's behalf.

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*Please note:* Some providers will submit invoices directly to students via mail, email or their proprietary online system. Students who receive invoices for expenses that are covered under Skidmore's comprehensive fee must submit the invoice(s) to OCSE for payment. Do not disregard invoices that you receive; doing so may jeopardize your enrollment in the program. Additionally, failure to submit the invoices in a timely fashion to OCSE may lead some providers to impose late fees which will be the students' responsibility to pay.

*What are program deposits and to who are they sent?*

Most programs require two deposits upon acceptance - a confirmation deposit to secure a spot in the program and a housing deposit. For Skidmore and non-Skidmore approved programs, a non-refundable confirmation deposit of \$500.00 is to be paid to Off-Campus Study & Exchanges, not to the provider. Checks and money orders should be made payable to "Skidmore College." Online payment of the deposit can be made through the Bursar's Office. The \$500 deposit will then be credited to their semester invoice. Skidmore will submit the confirmation deposit to the student's program on their behalf.

## ***Non-Skidmore Approved Programs***

Students are also responsible for paying any refundable deposits and non-included fees directly on-site or to the program provider. Any housing deposits need to be sent directly to the provider, not to Off-Campus Study & Exchanges. The majority of the housing deposits are refundable to the student at the end of the program. Please check with the program provider for its policy.

## **FINANCIAL AID**

Skidmore students participating on Skidmore and non-Skidmore approved programs can utilize their financial aid toward the costs of their program. If you currently receive financial aid, you should make an appointment with the Financial Aid Office to review the use of your financial aid package for off-campus study. In addition to Skidmore financial aid, some programs offer merit or need-based scholarships/grants for particular programs they sponsor. Please be sure to contact the program sponsor about possible scholarships. Also check for national scholarship funds for study abroad. Although limited, there are some organizations that offer grants to students studying overseas.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## POWER OF ATTORNEY

You may want to consider obtaining a Power of Attorney for financial matters that will allow another individual (preferably your parent or guardian) to sign on your behalf. Granting a Power of Attorney is a legal process that involves the drafting of a document which assigns to another person the power to act as your legal representative (Attorney in Fact) in specific situations. You may restrict signatory authority to only being able to endorse checks or expand it to include permission to take care of all your financial matters while you are out of the country. The choice is yours. However, by all means do not have your family or friends mail checks or other important paperwork to be signed to you abroad. You take great risk at having the check lost in the mail.

## PROPERTY INSURANCE

If you will be traveling with a laptop, digital camera, smart phone, tablet or other valuable equipment, make sure it is properly insured in case of loss, theft or damage.

Check your parent/guardian's homeowners insurance policy. Coverage for such valuables typically extends from the homeowners policy when travelling. If coverage isn't available under your parents/guardians' current homeowners insurance policy, there may be an option to add a rider to provide for such coverage. Have them check with their insurance agent/company. Purchase a personal articles insurance policy.

Here are a few companies that offer plans. You should research companies that will fit your specific needs.

- Gallagher - <https://www.gallagherstudent.com/products/personal-property-insurance/>
- State Farm - <http://www.statefarm.com/insurance/other/personal.asp>
- College Student Insurance - <http://www.collegestudentinsurance.com>

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## SAFETY MATTERS

### SAFETY WHILE STUDYING OFF-CAMPUS

In choosing to study off campus you have demonstrated that you are a challenge seeker of the very best kind. We here in the Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges hope that you'll continue to test yourself and take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves to you while off campus. Your safety and security are always important when traveling and living in a new environment. Although we hope that your time off campus will not be altered due to a health and/or safety emergency, it is important to be prepared and informed on best practices to stay safe. Below are lists of both everyday precautions and specific directives for global health and/or security crises for Americans studying abroad. However, these precautions can be applied when studying domestically in a new city.

#### General Safety Precautions

These precautions make good sense at all times; however, they are even more critical during any time of conflict. In addition to these guidelines, please rely on your on-site support staff to guide you as needed.

- Always check the Department of State (DOS) website before traveling outside of your host country.  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>
- Register yourself in the Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).
- Note the direct numbers of the United States Consulate or Embassy in your cell phone and know how to contact them in an emergency.  
[\(https://www.usembassy.gov/\)](https://www.usembassy.gov/)
- Formulate a plan for what you will do in an emergency. Know the direct numbers of whoever is supervising your program abroad and keep them on you at all times – in your phone and a written copy.
- Always keep your cell phone with you, charged and turned on.
- Be discreet or try to avoid speaking English in public if that is not the native language of the country you are visiting.
- Do not stand out by wearing typical American clothing (college sweatshirts, clothes with American symbols, shorts, etc.); try to dress as the locals do.
- Avoid highly trafficked tourist attractions and American establishments such as fast food chains and American-style bars.
- Be aware that anti-American sentiments do exist and do not get drawn into arguments. Avoid all conflicts.

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- Utilize the buddy system when going out, especially at night. If you do decide to venture out on your own, make sure to tell a friend and/or roommate where you plan to go. Consider taking a taxi or Uber/Lyft instead of walking alone.
- Be constantly aware of your surroundings and those around you. Remove yourself immediately from situations you suspect may be dangerous.
- Avoid demonstrations and protests. Follow local news reports to stay informed. Check your email regularly for announcements from your program, Skidmore, DOS or your local consulate or embassy.
- Use caution when talking about yourself and other members of your program. Do not offer information freely regarding your program or anything that might link you to an American organization.
- Communicate regularly with your family in the States and with your program provider.
- If you travel away from your program site, leave a detailed itinerary with your family and your program provider. Be sure to stick to your itinerary.

Remember that your health and safety are your responsibility. Pay attention to your surroundings and don't place yourself in situations that could be potentially dangerous. Pay attention to the advice from your program director or sponsor. If they recommend that you not travel alone or in a particular part of the country, pay attention. Any restrictions on travel are only made with your safety in mind.

## **Global Health and Security Crisis**

Global security and health crises such as a pandemic are uniquely challenging events. However, rest assured that programs have contingency plans in place to address such emergencies. OCSE, program providers and onsite staff are prepared to quickly pivot to institute appropriate protocols to safeguard students.

The host government, local community and program will implement various prevention and mitigation measures. The established policies and protocols can include health screening and testing, contact tracing, social distancing, use of face-coverings, personal hygiene requirements, curfews, mobility limitations, travel restrictions and possible periods of quarantine/self-isolation. As conditions onsite can often rapidly change, it may be determined that the safest course of action is to shelter in place. However, ultimately for the safety of all program participants, the onsite program may be suspended and all students will be required to return to their official place of residence.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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There are general precautions that students can put in place to be prepared for global health and security crises:

- Prior to departing for your program location register with the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (S.T.E.P.) at <https://step.state.gov/>. This is a free service that provides important information about safety conditions in your program country, as well as allowing the local U.S. Embassy the ability to contact you during an emergency. Students who are citizens of other countries should contact their embassy to register for a similar program.
- Prepare your own emergency kit to have onsite. You should consider including an adequate supply of the following items that will last at least several weeks beyond the program end date:
  - Bandages and topical antiseptic ointment/cleanser
  - Hand Sanitizer
  - Antibacterial wipes
  - Over-The-Counter medications such as a pain reliever/fever reducer and anti-diarrheal
  - A supply of your required prescription medication(s)
  - Disinfecting Wipes and Sprays
  - Masks
  - Disposable Gloves
- It is recommended that you purchase a refundable/changeable round-trip airline ticket for your travels. This is the best precaution in the event that you must depart before your original date. During such emergencies, students who have not purchased a return flight or purchased a non-changeable ticket find themselves at a disadvantage. They either struggle to obtain a flight or find themselves paying an exorbitant airfare due to limited flights and their last-minute purchase. OCSE also strongly suggests booking with a travel agent and/or specialist group. These professionals provide an extra level of support than booking directly with airlines or an online travel agency.
- Make certain that you have an active cell phone and established communication plan with your family.
- Routinely monitor both your Skidmore and program email for important updates.
- Stay abreast of local conditions by watching/reading government releases and news reports.

Please keep in mind that approaches to dealing with the crisis may differ from country to country. It is important that you understand that complying with program and government requirements during such extraordinary times is vital to the health and safety of everyone.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## RESOURCES IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

You should always know whom to contact in case of an emergency, medical or otherwise. Your first contact should be the director of your program. Please keep this person's phone number on you at all times. If you are living with a host family, they will be an important resource for you as well.

In addition to your program support system, if you are studying outside the United States the U.S. Department of State offers important information in case of a global emergency. Country Specific Information and travel advisories are issued by the U.S. State Department to inform U.S. citizens of unsafe travel conditions due to terrorist threats, civil or political unrest, overt anti-American attitudes, or specific health hazards. You have direct access to these advisories online at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs, a branch of the State Department, is responsible for protecting the interests of U.S. citizens abroad. They can assist in locating travelers in case of emergencies back home. They can also help you find medical treatment, legal counsel, or financial assistance in emergency situations. Their advice: In an extreme medical emergency, first get medical treatment from local sources. If immediate medical treatment is not necessary, call the nearest Embassy or Consulate to get advice about what to do next, including notifying local police or finding English-speaking doctors. Of course, you should always contact your resident director first and always keep that person informed of your health and well-being.

## OCSE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

The Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) at Skidmore College maintains emergency response protocols. This information is available upon request.

In the case of a significant occurrence that may impact an off-campus study program, OCSE will post updates to our webpage (<https://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/>) and/or directly email students and their families that may be impacted by the event.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Every state in the U.S. and every country has its own laws — and as a visitor, you're expected to follow them. That includes laws about drug possession and use.

Penalties for drug-related offenses can be extremely serious, even in countries that may seem more lenient. If you're caught with illegal substances while abroad, you could face arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment — and neither the U.S. government nor Skidmore College can intervene on your behalf.

*Don't risk it. Don't use drugs while abroad.*

Alcohol use varies country to country. In some cultures, alcohol may be more a part of everyday life than it is in the US. In other cultures, alcohol use may not be common due to religious beliefs. Regardless of where you study, citizens of the country where you will be studying will most likely have a very different attitude toward alcohol than is typically seen here. It is unlikely that binge drinking and getting drunk are widely accepted. Again, concerning your safety, you are much more at risk if you have been drinking, by becoming an easy target for less desirable people and by impairing your judgment. You will have to decide what to do for yourself, but be sure that alcohol does not interfere with your studies and you are acting within the laws and social norms of your place of study.

## PERSONAL CONDUCT

Students studying off campus are expected to adhere to the same social and academic policies in place at Skidmore College. Students who break Skidmore's Code of Conduct and/or the code of conduct on their off-campus program may face disciplinary action by their program and Skidmore College (or their home institution). Students who face disciplinary action may be responsible for sanctions imposed by Skidmore College in addition to those applied by the program. In the case of conflict among policies the more stringent policy shall apply. Students are responsible for understanding both Skidmore College's Code of Conduct as well as any Code of Conduct in place by their off campus study provider. Skidmore College's Code of Conduct policy is available at [http://www.skidmore.edu/student\\_handbook](http://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook).

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## HEALTH MATTERS

Studying abroad—or anywhere off campus—can be exciting, challenging, and deeply rewarding. Staying healthy plays a big role in making the most of your experience.

### **Talk to your doctor before you go**

Before departure, schedule a checkup and talk with your doctor about your physical and mental health. If you have ongoing health needs, work with Skidmore's Health Services or Counseling Center to plan ahead.

- Schedule a routine physical. A dental checkup is smart, too.
- Some programs require a physician-completed health form—check your program's instructions early.

Travel, time zone shifts, and adjusting to a new culture can intensify conditions that may be manageable at home. Preparing in advance can make all the difference.

### **Know your needs—and your options**

- **Be honest about your health.** If you live with a physical condition or mental disorder, be proactive. Meet with a Program Manager in Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) to discuss program options that fit your needs.
- **Disclose your history to your program.** Your program provider must know about any medical or mental health needs so they can support you appropriately—and respond in an emergency.
- **Consider program location and program structure.** Some programs involve remote fieldwork, high-altitude travel, or physically demanding activities. Others may be based in cities with limited access to certain services. Make sure your program aligns with your wellness needs.

### **Research health issues in your host country**

Read all health guidance provided by your program. Then go further:

- Check for regional health alerts, immunization requirements, or environmental factors that could impact you.
- Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Traveler Health](#) site for detailed, location-specific updates.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## Manage your medications wisely

If you take prescription medication, follow these steps well in advance:

- **Talk to your doctor** about dosage, alternatives, and local availability.
- **Confirm legality.** Some U.S. medications are restricted or banned abroad—even common prescriptions and over-the-counter meds. Always check your host country's consulate website or ask your program provider for help.
- **Bring enough for your stay.** In many cases, that means requesting a larger supply from your pharmacy and insurance provider. This process can take time.
- **Pack smart.** Always travel with medications in your carry-on, in original labeled containers. Include a copy of your prescription and, if applicable, a doctor's letter explaining the need for syringes or controlled substances.
- **Special note:** Codeine is classified as a narcotic in many countries. Ask your doctor about alternatives.
- **If you wear contacts or glasses,** bring extras and update your prescription. Contact solution may be hard to find abroad.

## Understand local healthcare options

Ask your doctor or program provider about how to access medical care in your host country. Program staff can often help you find a local physician or pharmacy if needed.

## Immunizations: check your list

Make sure your routine vaccinations are current—especially tetanus, polio, and MMR (measles, mumps, rubella). For some regions, additional immunizations may be recommended or required, including:

- Meningococcal vaccine (recommended for many students)
- Yellow fever, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis A/B, malaria meds (varies by location)

**Start early.** Some immunizations require a series of doses over weeks or months. Skidmore Health Services or your local provider can help you plan.

More info: [Centers for Disease Control Travel Health](#) or call 800-232-4636.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## Be ready for pandemics or outbreaks

International travel can be affected by pandemics like COVID-19, H1N1, or avian flu. Some countries screen travelers on arrival, so check embassy websites for current requirements.

To stay healthy while abroad:

- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Clean your living space regularly.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Travel only when you feel well.

If you get sick, notify your program staff right away. They'll help you find medical care and, if needed, contact a U.S. consular officer.

*After returning to the U.S.:* Monitor your health for 14 days. If symptoms arise, contact a healthcare provider — and share your travel history.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

### Coverage abroad

If you're studying outside the United States through a Skidmore or approved non-Skidmore program, Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) will provide you with international health insurance through GeoBlue for the full duration of your program. Policy benefits include but are not limited to emergency medical care, mental health services, medical evacuation and repatriation of remains.

You'll receive an email from the insurance provider shortly before your program begins. **Follow the instructions carefully to finalize your enrollment with GeoBlue.** The full policy brochure is available in the "Learning Content" section of your [OCSE application](#) and on the [OCSE website](#).

While not required, it's generally a good idea to keep your U.S.-based health insurance while studying abroad. This is especially important if you're not spending the full year overseas and will need coverage during semester break, after your program ends, or in the event of an early return due to an emergency.

### U.S.-based programs and mixed-location coverage

- If your program is based in the U.S.: Skidmore does not provide insurance. You should use the health insurance you normally use while enrolled at Skidmore.
- If your U.S.-based program includes international travel: Skidmore will provide coverage for the dates of the international component only.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## **Additional or required insurance**

Some program providers may:

- Require enrollment in a specific insurance plan
- Ask you to submit proof of existing coverage
- Leave coverage decisions up to you

*Note: Skidmore will only cover additional insurance costs if required by the program provider.*

If you're joining a **non-Skidmore program**, check directly with your provider about what's included and what's required. Make sure you understand:

- What's covered abroad (including outpatient care and prescriptions)
- Whether emergency care or hospitalization needs pre-approval
- Who is responsible for notifying the insurer in case of an emergency
- Whether the plan includes **evacuation and repatriation coverage**

## **Planning to travel outside your program dates? Plan ahead.**

Skidmore's insurance **only applies during the official program dates** — not before or after. If you plan to travel independently before or after your program:

- Check if your U.S.-based health insurance covers international travel.
- Ask your program provider if their policy extends beyond official dates.
- Consider purchasing supplemental coverage.

Options like the **International Student Identity Card (ISIC)** include basic medical insurance and may be helpful if your primary coverage doesn't extend abroad.

If you are not covered by your own plan, the program's plan, or an ID card, you'll need to purchase additional travel insurance. Look for short-term international plans that include emergency medical and evacuation coverage.

- WorldTrips - <https://www.worldtrips.com>
- INext - <http://www.inext.com/plans/supplemental/basic.aspx>
- CISI - <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/students/>
- Gallagher - <https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/leisure-travel/>
- HTH - <https://hthtravelinsurance.com/>

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Navigating relationships while studying abroad can be a new experience. Keep these four key considerations in mind:

- **Cultural Differences:** Be prepared for different norms and attitudes about relationships. Communicate clearly with your partner, as social cues can have different meanings.
- **Expectations:** Be open and honest about your expectations for a relationship and make sure you understand your partner's expectations.
- **Dating & Invitations:** Understand that a simple invitation, like "getting coffee," may have a different meaning than you are used to. Do some research and ask locals to avoid misunderstandings about what certain invitations imply.
- **Consent:** The definition and requirements for consent can vary by culture. Know your boundaries and be respectful of your partner's boundaries. Open communication is crucial.

### Sexual Health & Contraception

**Contraception:** Depending on your program location, contraception may not be as accessible or may not be the same quality you are used to. It's highly recommended that you bring a supply of condoms, birth control pills, or other contraceptives with you. Be aware that sending medication can be difficult, as it may be confiscated.

**Sexual Health:** STIs and STDs are present worldwide, and some countries have higher transmission rates. Research the risks in your host country and consider getting tested if you have unprotected sex. Bringing condoms from home is recommended, as quality and availability can vary.

**General Advice:** Cultural norms around dating, sexuality, and public displays of affection can differ significantly. Research your host country's laws and cultural practices regarding relationships, including same-sex and opposite-sex couples, to avoid misunderstandings or legal issues.

**Remember:** The only guaranteed way to prevent STIs and pregnancy is abstinence. If you choose to be sexually active, take control of your sexual health.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## **Sexual Harassment and Misconduct**

Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature is never acceptable. At times it can be difficult to interpret, especially once you are in another culture. Again, it is hard to know what behavior is culturally acceptable and what behavior is sexual harassment. If something makes you uncomfortable, trust your gut and get help immediately. Don't ever feel like you have to put up with behavior that makes you uneasy just because it might be "part of the cultural experience." Your personal safety always comes first, even when you're trying to be culturally sensitive.

If you ever experience unwanted sexual advances from another student, your host family, or program staff and can't resolve it yourself, reach out for help right away. Your study abroad program should have someone, like a Resident Director or Student Life Office, who can assist you.

And remember, **Skidmore has resources available** to all students, no matter where you're studying: <https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm>. Don't hesitate to use them—your safety and well-being are our top priority.



# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## DIVERSITY AND OFF-CAMPUS STUDY

When you study off campus — whether in another country or a different region of the U.S. — you'll engage with new perspectives and ways of life. You'll expand your worldview, deepen your curiosity, and sharpen your intercultural skills.

But no two off-campus experiences are the same. The identities you hold — including your race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and sexuality — may shape how you're perceived in your host community and how you see the world around you. Understanding those dynamics can help you prepare for a more confident, informed, and empowering experience.

We'll support you every step of the way, including through our pre-departure newsletter series. For now, here are a few key things to keep in mind:

### **Race, ethnicity, and nationality**

Like in America, discrimination based on racial and ethnic prejudices exists in other countries. Still, during your time abroad you may encounter situations that challenge your understanding of discrimination and racism. Make sure to do a little research about your host country before you leave. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- While traveling abroad, you will often first be identified as an American; your racial and ethnic identity may fall second to your national identity.
- In some places, you may receive extra attention because of the color of your skin, your hair, accent, or dress. Safety always comes first, but try to distinguish between ignorance or curiosity, and willful discrimination.
- Know the facts: Who are the racial and ethnic minorities in your host country? Are there laws concerning racial and ethnic discrimination? How is your ethnic group perceived in your host country? What stereotypes prevail? Will you be part of a majority or minority for the first time? How, if at all, will these factors impact your experience abroad.

# POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## **Gender & Sexuality**

Ideas about gender roles, relationships, and identity vary widely. In some regions, behaviors that are common in the U.S. — like making eye contact or dressing a certain way — may carry different social signals. In others, LGBTQ+ identity and expression may not be openly accepted or protected.

Rather than asking you to suppress who you are, our goal is to help you travel safely, smartly, and respectfully — with a strong support system behind you.

Here are a few tips as you prepare:

- Research local gender norms and laws before you travel. Know how women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and gender-diverse people are perceived and treated in the culture you're entering.
- Learn from local women and LGBTQ+ voices. Notice how they interact in public, navigate attention, or build community. Let their strategies guide your own.
- Choose your presentation intentionally. If blending in enhances your safety or comfort, consider adjusting dress or behavior — not as erasure, but as strategy.
- Plan ahead for unfamiliar situations. Know how you'll get home safely at night, where the nearest LGBTQ+ community centers are (if applicable), or how to deflect unwanted attention.
- Be selective about disclosure. In some cases, sharing your gender identity or sexual orientation may carry risks. We encourage you to talk with Off-Campus Study & Exchanges or your program provider about how “out” you want or need to be in your host community.

Skidmore is part of the [DA Global Access Network](#), a global collective that works to expand access to inclusive, transformative international experiences. Please use this as a resource to prepare for your semester off-campus.

# CONCLUSION

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## THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING GOOD.

Studying off campus is an exciting opportunity to expand your perspective—and we hope you take full advantage of it.

While your program staff will be your first point of contact, the Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) is here for you, too. If you have questions or just want to check in, don't hesitate to reach out. We're always happy to help.

