

SKIDMORE COLLEGE  
OFF-CAMPUS STUDY & EXCHANGES

**FAMILY HANDBOOK**



**TRAVEL SEMINARS**

**2019**



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# CAMPUS CONTACTS

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## General Contact Details

Skidmore College  
815 North Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 USA  
+1 (518) 580-5000  
<http://www.skidmore.edu/>

## Off-Campus Study & Exchanges

Starbuck Center 202  
Phone: +1 (518) 580-5355  
Fax: +1 (518) 580-5359  
E-mail: [ocse@skidmore.edu](mailto:ocse@skidmore.edu)  
Web: <http://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/>

## **Registrar's Office**

Phone: +1 (518) 580-5710  
Fax: +1 (518) 580-5749  
Web: <http://www.skidmore.edu/registrar/>

## Financial Aid

Phone: +1 (518) 580-5750  
Fax: +1 (518) 580-5752  
Web: <http://www.skidmore.edu/financialaid/>

## Campus Safety

**Outside of OCSE's office hours students and parents are advised to contact Campus Safety**

Jonsson Tower  
Phone: +1 (518) 580-5567  
Emergencies: +1 (518) 580-5566

## Faculty Director (student to complete)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## Faculty Director

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*Students will receive a Contact Sheet which lists important information (i.e., flight, accommodations, etc.), you should request a copy. \*\*\*

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Skidmore's Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges has a lot to celebrate!

Nearly 60% of our 2018 graduates studied off campus either internationally or domestically. In addition, Skidmore is consistently ranked in the top 10 among the top 40 Baccalaureate Institutions for the number of students studying abroad for one semester. (Data compiled by the Institute for International Education). And, the foundation of all this success, students can choose from 118 programs in 45 countries, including 5 Skidmore programs and several domestic options.

Of course, all of these accomplishments are wonderful in themselves; but, more importantly, they illustrate our overarching commitment to offering a portfolio of off-campus opportunities that enhance our on-campus curriculum and support the College's founding principle of linking theoretical and applied learning. Our ultimate goal is to allow students to engage in a distinct culture and, in turn, to begin to question the assumptions they hold regarding themselves, their own culture, and the cultures of others. Certainly in today's global society, we all need to be able to confront cultural expectations and stereotypes in our daily personal and professional lives. By developing and supporting a wide variety of off-campus opportunities, OCSE hopes to advance the College's goals of producing engaged citizens who possess a high level of intercultural literacy.

Your student has received a Pre-Departure Handbook and additional information from their program provider. Look through it with your student to understand what she or he needs to do before they **leave; some of what they'll encounter while they're away; and what you can anticipate when they return.** As well, we encourage families and guardians to keep abreast of information through our **website, beginning with our "Points for Parents" page, <http://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/parents.php>.**

Your son or daughter is preparing for the experience of lifetime—we wish him or her safe travels. For families, we wish peace of mind.



Cori Filson  
Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges

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# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

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The following lists are provided to students to help them keep track of steps they need to take before leaving for their destinations. As a family member it is important that you make sure that **your student has completed these steps. They are critical to your student's preparation for an** off-campus experience.

Before your student leaves campus:

- Confirm participation in the Travel Seminar with Skidmore by submitting the Acceptance of Offer Form, Health Assessment Form, copy of passport and both the student copy and parent/guardian copy of the General Agreement and Release Forms to OCSE. These items are needed before any student will be considered a participant in the Travel Seminar.
- Read thoroughly and submit all relevant materials sent by OCSE.
- If the student's program travel will require the use of a passport, please make sure it is valid** for at least six months beyond the end of the Travel Seminar.
- If the student does not already have a passport, make sure he/she applies for one right away.
  - Passport applications can be obtained at most U.S. Post Offices or you can go online at <http://travel.state.gov> for application forms and instructions. Remember to read all instructions before applying for a passport. You **MUST** have all required documents and photos. Passport applications that are incomplete will not be processed. Same day and expedited service are available for an additional fee.
- Individual students may need to obtain a visa for their Travel Seminar. This process can take months to complete, so they should not wait until the last minute! (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html> will give them the latest overseas visa requirements). Students are solely responsible for meeting these requirements.
- Make sure your student maintains good academic, social, and financial standing. OCSE reserves the right to withdraw a student from a Travel Seminar if they do not meet preset policies and procedures, including a 2.75 GPA and good social standing.

## Before your student leaves on the travel seminar:

- Passport - Make two copies of the first two pages (pages with their picture and personal information) of their passport in case they lose their passport. One should remain at home and the student should carry the other with them but separate from the actual passport.
- Review the State Department's Travel Information Sheet** for each country they plan to visit and general Travel Cautions at <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>
- Make certain that they have information on their international medical insurance and that they share that information with you. Students participating on international travel seminars will be covered through Skidmore College.
- Medications – Does the student have enough medication to last the length of the program?
- Eye glasses & Contact Lenses – Does the student have an extra pair in case they get lost or broken?
- Make sure the students checks with the Center for Disease Control to see which immunizations are recommended for the country they will be studying in. Check out their web page at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>
- Encourage the student to research the culture, history, customs and politics of the country to which they will travel.
- Discuss how the student will handle money related matters. He/she may want to exchange a small amount of currency (\$100) so that they have some funds when they arrive in country.
- Request that the student leaves a copy of their travel itinerary, pertinent contact numbers and emails in case of an emergency and you need to contact him or her?

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# PREPARING TO GO

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## PASSPORTS

All students must have a passport in order to study internationally. In addition, students who need visas will need a passport before they can apply for a visa. If your student does not have a **passport, they must apply for one immediately. If the student's current passport expires within 6 months from the end of the program, the passport must be renewed right away.**

Passport applications are available online at <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports.html> and at most U.S. Post Offices, although the applications are processed through the U.S. Department of State. Please contact your local Post Office to see if it is a passport agent. The application process typically takes 4-6 weeks. Passport applications, instructions, and approximate processing times are available online at <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports.html>.

It is also important that a student applies for a passport right away, especially if he or she will need to apply for a visa for the country that the program will take place in. If the passport is needed more quickly, an extra fee is required to expedite the process. Please confirm with the passport issuing agent regarding exact fees.

It is recommended for students to make several photocopies of their passport and keep them in separate locations in case they lose their passport or it is stolen. This way, they will have a record of their passport number and other information contained on the information page of the passport that will help expedite the replacement process. Students are encouraged to keep one copy with someone in the U.S. and keep another copy with them separate from the original passport. OCSE also requires the student to submit a copy of their passport during the program application process.

## VISAS

In addition to a passport, some students will need a visa to enter the host country. A visa is an official authorization, appended to a passport, permitting entry into and travel within a particular country or region for a specific purpose and timeframe. Typically, the actual visa will be a stamp in a passport although some countries will have electronic visas. OCSE will inform the student if they will **need a visa. It will be the student's responsibility to contact the** appropriate consulate to determine the correct procedure and costs for a visa, as this is a personal expense that is not paid by Skidmore. If a visa is required and not obtained, the student could be turned away at the border and/or withdrawn from the program.

The application process for a visa can be long and unpredictable so it is a good idea to plan ahead and start the application process early. A valid passport must be submitted along with the visa application that the consulate will keep until the visa is ready. This could take anywhere from one day to three months. We cannot stress enough that the visa process varies from country to country. Please have the student check the consulate of the country he/she will be studying in for detailed and accurate information. Please follow all instructions carefully and completely. The

consulate can reject the application for a visa and there is not anything OCSE can do to help if this happens.

Independent Travel Prior to the Start of a Travel Seminar: Please be aware that if a visa is required, the application process may require students to surrender their passport for *several weeks* prior to the start of the travel seminar (this will vary country to country). These requirements may impact independent travel plans. Students are advised to determine visa requirements as early as possible for their travel seminar, and especially in advance of planning independent travel. Students will only be permitted to participate in the travel seminar if they have obtained proper visa documentation (if required).

If a student runs into serious difficulties obtaining a passport or visa, private visa/passport agencies will expedite applications for a fee. Some of these agencies include CIBT, Travia, A Briggs Passport & Visa Expeditors, Affordable Passports, Perry International, and Passport Express. Skidmore does not endorse any of these agencies; we have simply heard that they provide visa services.

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# ONSITE CONDUCT

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As outlined in the Code of Conduct that the student has signed in order to participate on the travel seminar, he/she will be traveling as part of a group. The student has agreed to a common code of **behavior in order to ensure everyone's safety and well-being**. These rules apply from the time the group gathers for departure at the airport, throughout the program and until they all return.

Each participant will need to be respectful of others and create an environment conducive to learning.

The student is expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the policies governing behavior at Skidmore College. Disruptive, abusive or aggressive behavior (including sexual harassment) will not be tolerated. **Any violation will result in the student's immediate withdrawal from the program.**

If removed from the program, the student will be sent home, at their own expense. If he/she is dismissed from the program they will not earn credit or be refunded any monies that they have paid.

**It is understood that a decision to terminate the student's participation in the program is** final and un-appealable. Moreover, their misconduct/behavior may be subject to further disciplinary action by the Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs.

## Accompanying Family Members/Significant Others

Students may occasionally wish to have family members or their significant others accompany them on the Travel Seminar. This is not permissible and any such attendance by unauthorized individuals **on a Travel Seminar will be in violation of the college's policy.**

Students should arrange for their family member or significant other to join them onsite prior to the program commencing, leaving once it begins, or upon its completion rather than attempting to join the program itself.

OCSE will not make any accommodations for the family member/**significant other's participation in** any program component, including but not limited to excursions and meals. While OCSE and the faculty directors cannot prohibit their presence in public spaces, their participation in any travel seminar activities cannot **be sanctioned as these individuals are NOT covered under Skidmore's risk and liability coverage.** It is also expected that these individuals will refrain from visiting the **student's onsite accommodations or attempting to join group meals.**

It has been found that family members/significant others can serve as a distraction, taking the **student's attention away from the program and in some cases interfering with the program itself.** **As a result the program is adversely affected and the student's grade for the course is impacted negatively.**

The policy of not allowing individuals who are not formally enrolled in the Travel Seminar must be strictly adhered to for the benefit of all participants. Students found in violation of the policy will be immediately removed from the program and sent home at their own expense

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# ACADEMICS

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## ACADEMIC POLICIES

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.

While studying on a travel seminar, all students must adhere to the Honor Code and Academic **Policies in place at Skidmore College. Students are responsible for understanding Skidmore College's** academic policies. The Skidmore College Academic Policies can be found in the Skidmore College student handbook at [http://www.skidmore.edu/student\\_handbook/](http://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook/).

**Students must also follow OCSE's academic policies and the Travel Seminar Code of Conduct as well as any academic policies in place by faculty director(s) of the travel seminar. OCSE's academic** policies can be found at <http://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/policies/academic.php>.

### Skidmore College Honor Code

The Skidmore Honor Code defines the guiding principles of honesty, respect, and integrity that should inform all choices and behavior patterns in the Skidmore academic and social communities. Each student, in matriculating at Skidmore College agrees to the following code:

*I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by the College regulations.*

It is the responsibility of every student and every member of the faculty and staff, both by example and by instruction, to encourage students to embrace the standards of the Honor Code. If a student is aware of a violation, he or she is honor-bound to speak to the student, and if necessary, to report the student to the Dean of Student Affairs or other appropriate member of the staff or faculty. If a member of the faculty is aware that someone has committed an academic violation, faculty legislation requires that the faculty member report the violation to the Associate Dean of the Faculty for Academic Advising. It is only through a combination of ethical commitment, guidance, and sanctions that the Honor Code can become a living set of principles for our community.

### Maintaining Off-Campus Study Eligibility

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

## CREDITS

Skidmore College offers a variety of travel seminars, both domestic and international, over the summer and/or winter and spring breaks. Credits earned for travel seminars will vary but are stated in the program materials.

- Stand-alone travel seminar: This program is not connected to any course on campus; rather, the course is delivered in its entirety off campus. This program model may be offered during the winter, spring and summer breaks.
- Travel seminar incorporated into an on-campus course: This program is a combination of an on-campus course and an off-campus academic experience – the travel seminar. The on-campus course is offered during the fall or spring semester. The off-campus portion may be offered during the January, March or May breaks. The travel seminar will follow or be delivered in the middle of the on-campus course. Students cannot participate in the travel seminar without completing the on-campus course.

The various iterations of this model are:

- Fall semester on-campus course plus winter travel seminar
- Spring semester on-campus course plus spring break travel seminar
- Spring semester on-campus course plus subsequent travel seminar

Credits earned for travel seminars will vary but are stated in the program materials. All grades will appear on **the student's** transcript and be counted toward the Skidmore grade point average.

## ATTENDANCE

Given the compact pace of travel seminars, attendance is mandatory for each lecture, site visit or program-related activity. Failure to attend all program-related activities may result in **the student's** immediate withdrawal from the program and return to the U.S. at their own expense.

While attendance and involvement in onsite activities is a key element to the grade earned for participating in a travel seminar, each Faculty Director(s) may have additional assessment tools (i.e.; readings, written journals, papers, verbal presentations and/or exams) that they require of participants.

Adherence to the Code of Conduct, attendance at all program-related activities and completion of all required assessment tools will have an impact on the grade received for the travel seminar.

## ORIENTATIONS

Orientation/class meetings allow the student to ask questions about the course syllabus, papers, and other projects for the course. Attendance is mandatory for all orientations. Failure to attend orientations may result in their withdrawal from the travel seminar.

## 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 Coordinator** of Student Access Services as early as possible to discuss their needs for studying off campus.

If your student will need academic accommodations when studying off campus, he/she must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Coordinator of Student Access Services, at Skidmore College and provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability that supports the request. The application form and documentation requirements are also available online at <http://www.skidmore.edu/accessibility/index.php>. For further information, contact the office of Student Academic Services at 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, audio-taped etc.)

If the student's documentation is conclusive, the Coordinator will work with the student to determine which accommodations requested are reasonable for the college setting and, in turn, off campus study. The Coordinator will prepare a Memo of Academic Accommodations, which identifies the student as disabled (but does not state the type of disability) and lists the accommodations s/he is entitled to receive for the semester. The student should share this Memo of Academic Accommodations with OCSE (for Skidmore programs) when requesting accommodations for their off campus study.

As it is on campus, the success of disabilities support abroad depends significantly on the **student's** willingness and ability to seek the help he/she needs and to follow through with academic and other recommendations. Requests for accommodations and documentation of the disability 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 site, and specific program locations have limited accessibility.

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## MONEY MATTERS

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### BILLING

Travel Seminar participants will be billed by the Skidmore College Bursar. The fee and its inclusions and exclusions are listed in the program materials. As indicated the initial fee advertised may differ from what is billed. Generally this is due to a change in student enrollments, significant weakening of the dollar (exchange rate for international travel seminars) or unexpected price increases due to the economy/world events.

Invoices are typically sent a few months before the program begins and are due within 30 days.

## FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is available for eligible students for all travel seminars with the exception of those occurring during either summer session. Students should make an appointment with the Financial Aid Office (Starbuck Center – Room 101, 518-580-5750) to discuss the aid that may be available to them.

## MONEY MANAGEMENT

One of the questions most frequently asked by students is, **“How do I handle my money once I’m off campus?”** There are many answers to that question. The best way to handle money varies depending upon the travel seminar site and the student’s preferences. However, there are some general rules to keep in mind when planning for expenses. We strongly encourage students to discuss their budget and money management with their parents or guardians before they depart. It is important to understand how these matters will be handled and to have a support person at home to assist them in case of an emergency.

### Foreign Currency

Although it seems obvious, students must remember they will be dealing with a foreign currency when abroad. This money will look odd and seem like Monopoly money. But it is real. Some countries deal mainly in coins and have coins worth almost \$10. Once the student arrives they may be tempted to exchange all of their money into foreign currency and then start to spend. They should wait! They have to take time to figure out how the exchange rate works and what things are **really worth**. **Students can quickly find themselves broke because they didn’t understand how the new currency really works.**

### Traveler’s Checks & Cash

One of the most important things for students to remember is: do not travel with a lot of cash. Cash is impossible to replace if lost or stolen. If he/she must travel with a lot of money, they should **make sure it is in the form of traveler’s checks. Traveler’s checks are the safest form of money that** a student can use as they are insured and can be replaced if lost or stolen. Students should always keep a copy of the serial numbers for their checks and record the check numbers as they cash them. (The copy should be kept separate from the checks and students should leave a copy with someone at home.) This will make it easier to replace the checks if necessary.

**Although students can obtain traveler’s checks in other currencies, we recommend only carrying traveler’s checks in U.S. dollars. Students must purchase the checks themselves in the U.S.** as they will be the only person allowed to sign them once overseas. Travelers Cheques can be exchanged for local currency at accepting banks, foreign exchange locations, and some American Express

Travel Services Offices for a small fee. (Students will need to present their passport in order to cash **the traveler's checks.**)

**Unlike in the U.S., traveler's checks cannot be used to make purchases in stores in most countries,** but must be exchanged for cash.

While students should not carry a lot of cash, they should exchange a small amount of U.S. dollars into the local currency of their country of destination before they depart to cover the first few days. (If they are going to a lesser-traveled country, they may not be able to obtain currency until they arrive.) Students should be aware that they will be charged a fee for the service. Currency can also be exchanged at the airport prior to their departure. It is also a good idea to keep a small amount of U.S. dollars (\$50) for their return trip. Again, this will cover expenses when they return home.

### ATMs & Credit Cards

The advent of the ATM machine has facilitated money transactions when travelling. Most countries now offer this service on a wide scale basis. Students should check with their bank/credit union to determine if their ATM card will function properly in the country they are traveling to and/or if they need to use a different PIN abroad. Verify the maximum amount they can withdraw in one day or one week as this can vary from bank to bank in the U.S. And, as students know, banks have all sorts of fees and service charges. They should ask their bank how these fees will affect them abroad (for example, will they be charged each time they withdraw money?). These charges can be steep and will help to determine how they budget their money.

If ATM machines are widely available where they will be studying, they may want to look into obtaining a "debit" card that takes money directly from their designated account. This way, if they need additional funds, a family member can deposit them directly into their account and the student can have access to them almost immediately. Again, the student needs to ensure that their card has international withdrawal privileges, that they understand the fees associated with the use of an ATM **card, and that they have a numerical PIN number. (Some machines don't have the alphabet written above the numbers. This can make it very difficult to punch in their account code.)**

Credit cards are another source of money which is widely accepted throughout the world. As in the US, credit cards can be used in shops, restaurants, and hotels. If a student does decide to get a credit card for their trip, Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted names. American Express may be accepted but is less common.

Many countries around the world, particularly in Europe, have been transitioning to chip and PIN technology in their credit and debit cards. Chip and PIN technology is a new, more secure way of paying with credit or debit cards. The card has a computer chip embedded into it and it also has a PIN (personal identification number). In countries with Chip and PIN technology, credit cards are no **longer "swiped" on a magnetic strip as is done in the USA. Instead, the card goes through** or is inserted into a chip reader and the cardholder must enter his or her PIN to complete the sale. American debit/credit cards should still work in ATMs in other countries regardless of CHIP and Pin technology, but students may have to request that their card be swiped instead of using a CHIP and PIN reader. Keep in mind that some restaurants and stores may only take cards on the CHIP and PIN system, so students should always have cash on hand. Unmanned payment kiosks (typically found in train stations) usually required cards with the Chip and PIN technology. Some US banks

and credit card companies are now offering cards with the CHIP and PIN technology. Students should check with their bank and/or credit card company for more information.

Credit cards can also be used for cash advances in case of an emergency. (The student must make certain they have a numerical PIN for their credit card prior to departing.) We do not, however, recommend that they use them for this purpose unless it is truly an emergency! Cash advances carry tremendous fees and interest charges, which, if not paid immediately, add up to huge expenses. It is a good idea to check with the credit card carrier for details before they depart.

Travel Seminar participants should notify their credit card company that they will be traveling abroad, the dates and the countries they plan to visit. This will help to prevent any disruption in **usage due to a fear on the credit card company's part of fraudulent charges.**

Students should make a copy of the front and back of their ATM and credit cards and keep it in a safe place (i.e. with their passport). This will give them the necessary contact information and numbers in the event their card is either lost or stolen.

#### Other Options

If the student will be in a country without good ATM and credit card access, there are other options **for their money. As mentioned, travelers' checks are commonly accepted in most countries. If funds** get tight and they need emergency cash, money can be wired directly to a foreign bank via telex, which costs about \$30 and takes from 1 to 5 days. Funds can also be transferred via American Express or Western Union. It is a good idea for you and the student to look into this before they depart so that you have an emergency plan in place. In a true emergency, the faculty director(s) and/or the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate can assist students.

## BUDGET

The program fee will typically include the round-trip transportation to the program site, onsite ground transportation, accommodations (generally double occupancy), meals, international medical insurance and entrance fees, local guides and cultural excursions for program activities.

Due to location and program itinerary the number of meals provided will vary. Some programs will have all planned group meals while others will provide meal stipends to students to dine or purchase groceries independently. There can also be a combination of planned meals and stipend. Additionally, the housing for travel seminars will vary depending on the program site. Options include but are not limited to hotels, apartments, residence halls, field stations and/or tents.

It is important that everyone understand the total out-of-pocket expenses a student will incur so that you can budget appropriately. The program fee will not cover all expenses incurred by a student participating on a travel seminar. There are additional costs that the student must budget for otherwise they could end up running out of money before their program is over.

### Potential Personal Expenses:

#### TRAVEL

Round-trip transportation to the program departure/return point: \_\_\_\_\_

On-site transportation (during free time, not included in program fee): \_\_\_\_\_

Passport and visa expenses: \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Exam (required by some countries for visa): \_\_\_\_\_

#### PERSONAL EXPENSES

Food (meals not included in the program fee): \_\_\_\_\_

Books and supplies: \_\_\_\_\_

Photos, student ID card, etc.: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal incidentals (laundry, toiletries): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/postal stamps/postcards: \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Entertainment (museums, theatre, nightclubs): \_\_\_\_\_

Souvenirs and gifts (for student, family and friends): \_\_\_\_\_

Inoculations (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ESTIMATED OUT OF POCKET COSTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SAFETY MATTERS

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## SAFETY WHILE ABROAD

Your **student's** safety and security are always important when traveling and living overseas. Although we hope that during their time away you will not have to concern yourself with global crisis, we know that the world situation is constantly changing. Therefore, we offer the following safety precautions for Americans studying abroad. These precautions make good sense at all times; however, they are even more critical during any time of conflict. In addition to these guidelines, students should rely on their Faculty Director(s) and local program staff to guide them as needed.

- Avoid speaking English in public if that is not the native language of the country they are visiting.
- Do not stand out by wearing typically 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 typically American bars.
- Be aware that anti-American sentiments do exist and do not get drawn into arguments. Avoid all conflicts.
- Be constantly aware of their surroundings and those around them. Remove themselves immediately from situations they suspect may be dangerous.
- Use caution when talking about themselves and other members of their program. Do not offer information freely regarding the program or anything that might link them to an American organization.
- If someone leaves a bag/package unattended near them in any crowded public place (e.g., airport, train or bus station, market or tourist site), notify the driver or other authority and get away from it as quickly as possible.
- In the unlikely event of a political conflict, OCSE and the Faculty Director(s) will monitor the situation. Students are required to follow the directions of the Faculty Director(s) in the event of an emergency.
  - Be vigilant when in public.
  - Keep away from areas known to have large concentrations of residents sympathetic with interests unfriendly to the U.S. and its allies.
  - Avoid political demonstrations. They can at times become violent due to clashes between police/soldiers and protestors.
  - Students should not agree to any interviews with the media. It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible. If they do participate in an interview, do not mention their seminar group or give any specifics regarding their itinerary.

They must remember that their health and safety are their responsibility. Pay attention to their surroundings, keep their **head on straight, and don't place** themselves in situations that could be potentially dangerous. Above all, remember to use common sense. Pay attention to the advice from the Faculty Director(s) or program staff. If s/he recommends that they not travel alone or in a particular part of the country, pay attention. Any restrictions on travel are only made with their safety in mind. Also, please take a look at the SAFETI Clearinghouse web site, which covers many safety issues for students abroad: <http://www.globaled.us/safeti>.

## RESOURCES IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

Students and families should always know whom to contact in case of an emergency, medical or otherwise. Your first contact should be Off-Campus Study & Exchanges at Skidmore College or the **emergency contact for the program. Your student's first contact should be the** resident director of their program.

In addition to the program and OCSE support system, 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 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. You can find this information in Appendix II and on our website at: <https://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/emergency/protocols.php>.

The Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will post updates to this site as events change throughout the world.

## DRUGS & ALCOHOL

If your student will be studying outside of the U.S., he/she will be subject to the laws and regulations of the judicial system of the host-country. Refusing to obey local laws, especially those that concern the use of illicit drugs, will get your student expelled from the program and they may be incarcerated. Do not assume that laws are more lenient abroad or that foreign governments are more tolerant. Do not assume your student will be protected as an American citizen. If your student is arrested, there is very little their off-campus study program, Skidmore College, or the U.S. Embassy can do. In fact, the U.S. Embassy has absolutely no **jurisdiction to intercede in the host country's judicial system. There are currently hundreds of** Americans under detention for drug violations in countries throughout Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. In some of these countries, prisons are primitive and overcrowded, lack sanitation facilities and bedding, offer limited quantities of substandard food, and provide little or no

heat or light. Again, there is little anyone can do to assist your student if they are arrested for drug use overseas. Therefore, we cannot reiterate strongly enough; students should not use, possess, or distribute illegal drugs of any kind, including marijuana, while abroad.

In addition to the legal concerns surrounding drug use, students must strongly consider the safety issues involved. Although students think they are not at risk and that they can handle themselves in any situation, this is just not the reality of studying overseas. Students do not know the culture. They **do not know how to read natives' behavior**. They do not know who is dangerous and who is not. Students should not under any circumstances put yourself at risk by participating in drug-related activities.

Each country will have a different attitude on alcohol use. 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 your student is studying, citizens of that country will most likely have a very different attitude toward alcohol than is typically seen in the U.S. It is unlikely that binge drinking and getting drunk are widely accepted. Again concerning your **student's** safety, students are much more at risk if they have been drinking, by becoming an easy target for less desirable people and by impairing their judgment. Students are asked to obey local laws, observe the culture with regard to alcohol use, listen to advice and information provided by the program staff, and use common sense. Students will ultimately have to decide what to do for themselves, but they should be sure that alcohol does not interfere with their studies.

## PERSONAL CONDUCT

Students studying on a travel seminar 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 Travel Seminar Code of Conduct may face disciplinary action by Skidmore College.** Students are responsible for understanding both **Skidmore College's Code of Conduct as well as the Travel Seminar Code of Conduct. Skidmore College's Code of Conduct policy is available at [http://www.skidmore.edu/student\\_handbook/#Conduct](http://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook/#Conduct).**

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# HEALTH MATTERS

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## HEALTHY LIVING

An important aspect to a successful off campus experience is staying healthy while travelling. OCSE, when needed, will provide information and recommendations to students on health issues for the area/country to which they will travel. We strongly recommend that your student read all the information on health issues. Also, look on the web for information about health issues in the parts of the world your student is going to visit. Visit the Centers for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. We suggest your student discusses health needs with his or her doctors to ensure they understand if there are any restrictions to their activities.

Please be aware that the stress of travel and adjusting to a new culture can exacerbate physical or emotional conditions that may be under control at home. Therefore, if your student has a physical or **emotional condition it is important that they meet with the staff at Skidmore's Health Center** or Counseling Services to discuss how studying off campus could affect their situation. Addressing health issues prior to studying off campus will help to identify those resources that will and will not be available at the program site.

Also, if your student has particular health issues that OCSE or the Faculty Director(s) should be aware of, please make sure your student informs us before they depart. Some travel seminars may be located in remote regions where certain medical services are not available or the travel seminar may include physically demanding components; and, therefore, may not be suitable for all students due to lack of support services or the structure of the program.

## BEFORE THEY GO

It is strongly recommended that the student contact their doctor and dentist prior to departure to schedule a check-up or to discuss any pre-existing medical or dental conditions. If there are any prescription medications that your student needs to take while off campus, get them filled shortly before they leave. They should be kept in their original, labeled containers and packed in carry-on luggage, not in checked luggage. They should bring enough medication for the duration of their stay and be wary of buying prescription drugs when travelling internationally. Students should take the actual written prescription with them in case they need to show them at Customs or have an emergency and need additional medication. (If your student regularly takes medicine with codeine, they should speak with their physician about using an alternative while abroad because codeine is considered a narcotic in many parts of the world.) Syringes and needles necessary for medications must be **accompanied by a doctor's letter**. It is important that students take and carry all necessary and emergency medications with them, such as an EpiPen® (Epinephrine Auto-Injectors) for example. Students with a chronic medical condition will want to consider wearing a medical alert style bracelet. Also, contraceptives may be in short supply or of poor quality in certain countries. If your student wears glasses or contacts, they should take extra eyeglasses or contacts and contact solution, the same brand may be unavailable where they are travelling.

## Immunizations

**All of your student's routine immunizations** should be up to date. Students who have not had the meningococcal vaccine should consider this vaccination. OCSE and the Faculty Director(s) may provide recommendations on any vaccinations or medications that may be needed in particular to the program location. Other immunizations are rarely required for travel to most of Europe, Australia, or New Zealand. However, travelers to many developing countries may need immunization against yellow fever, typhoid, cholera, and other diseases including malaria and hepatitis. Students should start their immunizations early. Some cannot be given at the same time as others or may require a series of shots over several months. For information about immunizations specific to the destination contact the Centers **for Disease Control Travelers' 24-hour** hotline, (404) 332-4559 or visit: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>. Students traveling on international travel seminars will also want to contact Skidmore Health Services to discuss health concerns in the host country, the pros and cons of receiving certain immunizations, and to plan the administration of any vaccinations you choose to receive. Please be aware that some vaccinations can be expensive (\$50 or more per shot). This can be discussed with Health Services. No matter where your student is going, make sure their immunizations for tetanus, polio and measles, mumps, rubella, are up to date.

## Pandemic Illnesses

Pandemic illnesses such as the H1N1 or avian flu can impact a **student's off** campus study experience. While symptoms may vary, students are advised to take extreme caution if they experience any symptoms reported to be associated with any current pandemic illnesses or outbreaks. Some countries have instituted monitoring techniques of travelers arriving from areas affected by a pandemic outbreak, which may delay travel. Please consult the embassy of the country or countries in the travel itinerary for information about entry screening procedures.

Students are encouraged to take the following precautions to stay healthy before and during their off campus study:

- Before you go, see a doctor.
- Receive all required immunizations and discuss optional vaccines with your health care provider.
- Travel only when you feel well
- Follow basic health tips while you are travelling.
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
  - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
  - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If your student becomes sick with symptoms of a pandemic illness, they should notify their Faculty Director(s) as soon as possible to locate medical services. The Faculty Director(s) can also contact a U.S. consular officer if necessary.

After students return to the U.S., they should:

- Monitor their health for 10 days.
- If they become ill with symptoms associated to a pandemic illness during this 10-day period, consult a health-care provider. *Before visiting a health-care setting, tell the provider the following: 1) symptoms, 2) travel location, and 3) if the student has had direct contact with a*

*severely ill person or animal. This way, the health care provider can be aware that the student has traveled to an area reporting a pandemic illness.*

- Students should not travel while ill, unless they are seeking medical care. They should limit contact with others as much as possible to help prevent the spread of an infectious illness.

## HEALTH INSURANCE INFORMATION

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges provides all students studying on Skidmore Programs or Approved Programs outside the U.S. with international health insurance coverage through the On Call International. Plan information can be found in the “Health & Safety” section of the OCSE website at <https://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/safety/index.php>. Students can download the insurance card and a proof of coverage declaration letter from their MyOCSE account at (<http://myocse.skidmore.edu>).

Off-Campus Study & Exchanges does not provide insurance for students studying on a non-Skidmore Approved program in the U.S. Instead, students should continue to utilize the health insurance they normally have while studying at Skidmore. If your off-campus study program is based in the U.S. but includes an international travel component, Off-Campus Study & Exchanges will provide supplemental international health insurance for the dates of the international component of the program.

Skidmore students participating on a non-Skidmore Approved program are advised to check with their program provider for details concerning additional insurance coverage. Some providers will require coverage by a specific plan or will require your student to provide proof of sufficient insurance coverage by submitting a health insurance waiver. Other providers will depend on your student to decide for his/herself what will be sufficient insurance coverage. No matter the **circumstances with your program provider, students will be covered by Skidmore’s policy with On Call International.** (Please note that Skidmore will not cover the charge for additional insurance coverage unless it is mandatory through the program provider.)

When reviewing **Skidmore’s policy with On Call International** or the program provider’s health insurance coverage, students should be sure you understand the extent of the coverage abroad. Pay special attention to the restrictions that may apply to overseas living.

**Any specific benefit questions regarding your student’s health insurance coverage should be** directed to On Call International at 1-855-226-1622 (within the U.S.) or 1-603-952-2041 (collect from anywhere in the world). You can also elect to text (603-945-0103) or email ([mail@oncallinternational.com](mailto:mail@oncallinternational.com)).

**Note:** Students are only covered by Skidmore’s policy outside of the U.S. and only during the official dates of the program. Students are not covered by Skidmore’s policy prior to the official start date of their program or after the official end date of the program.

You can find information for the insurance provided by Skidmore through On Call International at <https://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/safety/index.php>.

**It is important to also consider how the student’s current U.S. based health insurance works while they are overseas.** It is very important that they understand HOW their insurance coverage works

overseas, WHAT types of illness and emergency care the insurance covers, WHERE they will go to receive your health care abroad, and WHY they should have coverage that provides for medical evacuation and repatriation.

At a minimum students should understand the following about the insurance before your student leaves for his/her off-campus study program:

- Will your student be covered for an office visit if you get sick and need to see a physician while abroad? Will the cost of any prescription medicine be covered? What information does he/she need to provide to his/her health insurance provider to be reimbursed?
- What happens if your student require emergency care or need to be hospitalized? Does overseas hospitalization need to be pre-approved? If pre-approval is not required, when does the insurer need to be notified about the hospitalization and by whom?
- Will your student's insurance cover medical evacuation? What about repatriation in the event of death? (This last question can be very difficult for students and parents to address, but is necessary. In the event you are involved in a serious accident, the cost of evacuation can be in the tens-of-thousands of dollars.)
- Will your student's insurance cover you if your student travels independently of his/her study abroad program?
- If your student intends to travel before or after your program, does his/her health insurance cover him/her while he/she is not formally registered for the program? (IMPORTANT)

If your student will be traveling outside of the official dates of the program (prior to the official start date of the program or after the official end date of the program), it is important to understand his/her insurance coverage during these times. Some students will be covered internationally by their primary, U.S.-based insurance; other students may be covered by the insurance provided by their program directly. These policies may or may not cover your student outside fo the official program dates. In addition, some student international identification cards, such as the International Student Identification Card (ISIC), offer basic international medical insurance. These cards, available online, are fairly inexpensive and may be an option if your personal health insurance policy does not cover you abroad. It is the students' responsibility to determine what coverage they will have outside of the U.S.

**If students are not covered by their own insurance, by the program's insurance or through a student ID card, they will need to purchase additional insurance to cover them outside of the program dates and during extended breaks.** The following is a list of insurance companies that offer short-term, leisure travel insurance. Please feel free to visit these websites to obtain a quote or conduct an internet search for additional companies.

INext - <http://www.inext.com/plans/supplemental/basic.aspx>

CISI - <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/students/>

Gallagher - <https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/leisure-travel/>

HTH Worldwide - <https://hthtravelinsurance.com/>

## 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 **homeowner's** 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/students/student-personal-property/>

State Farm - <http://www.statefarm.com/insurance/other/personal.asp>

College Student Insurance - <http://www.collegestudentinsurance.com>

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# TRAVEL

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## TRAVEL AND ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS

Unlike semester/academic year programs, OCSE makes travel arrangements for most travel seminars, including but not limited to airline, train, bus tickets, as well as local transportation.

The student will receive information on travel arrangements for their program, as well as flight schedules and when/where they will be required to meet for departure and return.

The program will not provide round-trip transportation from the student's home to the airport; this is their responsibility.

Participants have received the following warnings:

DO NOT BE LATE!  
IF YOU MISS YOUR FLIGHT  
YOU MAY VERY WELL MISS THE ENTIRE *PROGRAM!*

RESCHEDULING A FLIGHT CAN BE DIFFICULT, TIME CONSUMING, AND EXPENSIVE. WHILE OCSE WILL WORK TO ASSIST THEM IN THIS PROCESS, ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR FLIGHT CHANGES **WILL BE SOLELY THE STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY.**

## SAFETY WHILE TRAVELING

Students should be aware of the following:

- Do not leave their bags or belongings unattended at any time. Security staffs in airports and/or train stations are instructed to remove and/or destroy any unattended luggage. Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Make sure no one puts anything in their luggage.
- If someone leaves a bag/package unattended near them in any crowded public place (e.g., airport, train or bus station, market or tourist site) they should notify the proper official and get away from it as quickly as possible.
- When they travel use a money belt or neck pouch to carry their passport, credit cards and travelers checks. Wear either under their clothes. Keep a separate record of their travelers checks in another part of their belongings so that they will have a record if the checks are lost or stolen.
- Do not carry an excessive amount of cash, no more than they can afford to lose, as cash cannot be replaced.

## GETTING THERE AND BACK

OCSE will provide specific instructions to students regarding group flights to and from the program site. Group flights are offered as a benefit to participants and allow better coordination of the travel seminar itinerary. However, under certain circumstances students will be allowed the opportunity to make their own individual flight arrangements. This is done on a limited basis due to the airlines requirements in obtaining group flight contracts. OCSE generally utilizes one of the following airports for its group flights: Albany International Airport, John F. Kennedy International Airport or

LaGuardia International Airport in New York, Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey and Boston Logan International Airport in Massachusetts.

Once a student has been accepted into the program and submitted the required forms, they must immediately notify OCSE in writing if they desire to make alternative flight arrangements. Requests will be approved on a case-by-case basis. If a student is permitted to make their own flight arrangements, the cost of the group flight ticket will be deducted from their program fee and the student will be responsible for purchasing their own airfare. Students must provide OCSE with their final itinerary (including airline carrier, flight number, date, and time of arrival) as soon as it is finalized.

If not taking the group flight, a student will have to find their own way to the program site (i.e., hotel, initial excursion point) at their own expense.

Whether or not a student travels on the group flight, reservations for international flights should be made well in advance of the departure date. Inexpensive flights to certain cities might be difficult to obtain. Also, inexpensive flights very often have severe restrictions regarding changes in flight dates or cancellations. It is important to understand the restrictions of your ticket before buying it. Once the ticket is paid for, you will be responsible for working within those rules.

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# PACKING

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## CHECKED BAGS

Clothes that require minimal care, are comfortable to travel in, and can be layered are best to take. These items include turtlenecks, T-shirts, lightweight sweaters, and sweatshirts. Layering is also the best way to combat temperature changes. Rolling clothes is the advisable method of packing as students can fit more in their suitcase and have fewer wrinkles in their clothes upon arrival.

Students should ensure that every bag is marked in capital letters with their name, address and final destination both inside and outside of the bag.

Students should be reminded that both trains and planes place additional charges on extra or overweight luggage. They should check with their airline for the most recent regulations on check-in procedures and carry-on baggage.

It is strongly recommended that students estimate their bags weight on a bathroom scale or purchase a handheld luggage scale. To be cautious, if they plan on also bringing a piece of carry-on luggage leave space to pull items out of the checked bag and place in their carry-on in case of a weight issue.

Skidmore will not pay, nor reimburse any additional baggage fees.

Students should make sure that everything they pack is essential. Since they will also probably accumulate quite a few gifts and souvenirs, it is a good idea for them to leave space in their suitcase(s). Some items (excluding clothing) that they should consider bringing are as follows:

- travel alarm clock (battery operated)
- comfortable walking shoes
- waterproof storage bags
- umbrella
- extra batteries
- travel purse or money belt
- glasses/contact lenses (also an extra pair)
- combination locks for luggage (to use upon arrival to store valuables)
- flashlight
- shower shoes
- journal
- first aid kit
- sewing kit
- adapter & voltage converter (multi-country)

Please note that while toiletries are available most everywhere, particular brand names may not be readily available. If students must have a certain brand, they should plan to bring it from home. These may include:

- deodorant
- sunscreen
- hair care products
- over the counter medications (i.e.; Tylenol/Advil/aspirin, antacids,
- feminine products
- dental products (i.e., toothpaste, mouthwash, etc.)
- soaps and lotions
- eye care products (i.e., contact lens solution, etc.)

laxatives, vitamins, etc.)

## CARRY-ON BAGS

Students should remember to carry all essential items (i.e. prescription medications, important paperwork, travel documents, etc.) with them. **DO NOT PACK SUCH ITEMS IN THEIR CHECKED LUGGAGE.** If their luggage is lost, they will have to replace items that could be difficult to replace while overseas. It is advisable that they pack one change of clothing in their carry-on as well.

## ELECTRONICS

Worldwide, electricity generally runs on 220 volts, while U.S. runs on 110 volts.

Students will need both a converter for the voltage and an adapter to fit foreign sockets, both of which are different from those in the U.S. They must make sure the converter (transformer) is suitable for the appliance – computers require a higher capacity than other appliances. They might consider buying an inexpensive hair dryer or radio while abroad – the money they will spend will save them lots of blown fuses, fried converters or electronics.

Electronics stores, such as Radio Shack or Best Buy, can provide assistance in determining what they will need while abroad. Be mindful that sockets (and voltages) can vary from country to country.

**And don't forget to inquire about surge protectors, especially for delicate electronics such as a laptops, tablets, smartphones or other such items.**

## PROPERTY INSURANCE

If the student will be traveling with a laptop, digital camera, smart phone, iPod, iPad or other valuable equipment, they should make sure it is properly insured in case of loss, theft or damage.

It is advisable that students check their parent/guardian's **homeowner's** insurance policy. Coverage for such valuables typically extends from the homeowners policy when travelling. If coverage isn't available under the parents/guardians' current homeowners insurance policy, there may be an *option* to add a rider to provide for such coverage. Please check with your insurance agent/company. Students can also plan to purchase a personal articles insurance policy.

Here are a few companies that offer plans. Students should research companies that will fit their specific needs.

Gallagher (<https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/student-personal-property/>)

State Farm (<http://www.statefarm.com/insurance/other/personal.asp>)

College Student Insurance (<http://www.collegestudentinsurance.com>)

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# COMMUNICATION

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Suddenly your child/loved one is farther away than a quick call or a weekend visit. How do you check in on him or her?

Some countries visited by travel seminars will have limited access to telephones and internet service. These circumstances, in addition to the fast-paced and detailed itinerary typical of a travel seminar can make communication with the student during the program difficult.

Due to the short duration of the travel seminar, it may not be cost effective or necessary to purchase a cell phone in the host-country. Prior to your departure, discuss with your family and friends how you plan to communicate during your travel seminar, especially if you will have limited access to phone or internet service.

If your son or daughter has a U.S. cell phone, you can contact the U.S. cell provider to inquire about international rates. However, it is very expensive to use a U.S. cell phone outside of the U.S. Students are recommended to stay in touch via email or to call the U.S. with a calling card although because of the intensive schedule of the travel seminar, students will have limited access to the internet and phone.

AT & T USA Direct Service is one of the easiest ways to call directly to the U.S. via an English-speaking operator from anywhere in the world. Log onto [www.usa.att.com/traveler](http://www.usa.att.com/traveler) for information.

If your student is bringing a laptop, will have access to the internet, and has a microphone or webcam, they may want to use an internet-based phone service like Skype which allows users to make phone or video calls for free or low rates. You can download **Skype for free at Skype's website** at <http://www.skype.com>. Other options include FaceTime, or the app, WhatsApp (<http://whatsapp.com/>) which is a mobile messaging app that utilizes the internet.

Other tips for staying in touch with your student:

- Fix a pre-arranged time to speak but keep in mind the program schedule and time difference.
- **Keep your student's program itinerary on hand. Parents/guardians sometimes worry** unnecessarily when they do not hear from their student, only to find that s/he was on a scheduled excursion and had no free time available on that day.
- Students should try to avoid long-distance calls made directly from hotels; they sometimes have an expensive surcharge.
- In many countries public phones are no longer coin operated. Students must purchase a local telephone card to make them work. Find out the specifics of the country your student is travelling to.

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# CULTURE SHOCK

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## CULTURE SHOCK: FACT OR FICTION?

One of the greatest challenges to studying off campus is that it invokes change. Have you given any thought as to how your student might change as a result of studying off campus? Take some time to think about what you hope your student will get out of your experience. We also recommend that you encourage your student to learn as much as they can about where they will be studying.

Even if your student feels prepared, they will experience some level of cultural adjustment when studying in a new place. First and foremost, please know that culture shock is real and it is normal. Even though the travel seminar is a short-term program, your student may experience some level of cultural adjustment when studying off campus. Culture shock may present itself in different ways including physical and emotional symptoms. Students may become very tired physically, from trying to understand language, customs and a myriad of unfamiliar daily tasks, and emotionally, because as hard as one tries to reach out and connect, they **aren't having the experience they hoped to** have. Disappointment can set in.

Encourage your student to use some proven techniques to help him or her through the culture shock phase and into the next stage of full participation and enjoyment. He or she should

- Acknowledge that culture shock is normal and that "this too shall pass";
- Write about concerns in a journal and sleep on them before calling home or acting on grievances;
- Talk with other travel seminar participants and the Faculty Director(s), and provide support for other students;
- Keep busy and set some concrete goals;
- Resist withdrawing from social situations;
- Avoid being judgmental – look on the positive side of diversity and difference;
- Take care to get enough sleep, eat right, and keep a sense of humor.

Above all, encourage your student to get involved in the many activities provided by the travel seminar **and don't let them succumb to the temptation to withdraw—remember, life's an adventure!** Also, remind them not to take matters too seriously. In fact, it will be the most embarrassing moments that will make the best stories when they return home. In the end, students develop valuable cultural competence that will serve them very well in their future endeavors.

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# DIVERSITY AND OFF-CAMPUS STUDY

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Skidmore's off-campus study programs are critical to achieving the College's goal of increased intercultural and global understanding for students and the campus at large.

## Diversity and Inclusion at Skidmore College

Skidmore College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community in which members develop their abilities to live in a complex and interconnected world. Consistent with our educational mission, we recognize ourselves as a community that respects individual identities based on varying sociocultural characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, first language, religious and spiritual tradition, age, ability, socioeconomic status, and learning style. We strive to create a socially just world that honors the dignity and worth of each individual, and we seek to build a community centered on mutual respect and openness to ideas—one in which individuals value cultural and intellectual diversity and share the responsibility for creating a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment. We recognize that our community is most inclusive when all members participate to their full capacity in the spirited, and sometimes challenging, conversations that are at the center of the **College's educational mission**.

## Special Diversity Concerns Abroad

Students with distinct ethnic backgrounds and those of distinct sexual orientation are sometimes more concerned about where they will fit within their new environment. In some cases their background will provide a challenge, in others it will not. In many situations, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, your student will find you need to adjust to accommodate the host culture. Students can neither expect nor demand that others will adjust to them. This is true for all students and should be kept in the back of your mind when dealing with the challenges of living abroad.

## Some Questions to Ask

The following questions will help those students with special concerns think about their upcoming experience. However, all students should read them and consider the answers.

- What are the minority groups in your host country? Will you be a minority in that country?
- **What are men's, women's and minorities' roles (social, professional, religious, etc.)** in your host country?
- Do men, women and minorities have equal opportunities and protection under law? Equal educational and professional opportunities?
- Do women and minorities serve in the military?
- Do women work outside the home?
- What type of leadership roles do women and minorities hold?
- How do men treat local women? How do they treat American women?
- How does the host country population view minorities within the country and elsewhere?
- **Is there a women's rights movement or a civil rights movement?**
- Are there special concerns or issues that women and minorities should be aware of before they study abroad in this country?
- Where do women and minorities fall within the social hierarchy?

### Ethnic Background

Off-Campus Study can have a life-long impact on an individual. As with anything new, studying off campus evokes a change in the way your student will see his/herself, the world, and most importantly, his/her place in the world. Placing his/herself in a different context from what is **“normal” is an eye opening and enlightening experience.**

If your student is studying off campus in search of your cultural roots, he/she may find that his/her expectations of acceptance and understanding from the host culture on the basis of having a shared ethnic background is not met. For example, a Vietnamese American should not assume that the Vietnamese will treat him/her **as “one of their own”**. Likewise, if your student is an African-American studying in South Africa, he/she should not expect your hosts to see him/her as an African. Granted, not all people of color will have the same experience abroad for they are as diverse as the countries they will visit. However, ethnicity may play a role in defining the expectations of the experience and is something to consider before departure.

If your student is of American or European descent, studying abroad may also be the first time he/she is **labeled as an “American”, or the first time** he/she become conscious of having an identity based upon nationality. This is a unique opportunity for Caucasian students in the United States to begin to understand, if even in a small way, the experiences of minority groups in **the U.S. It’s a chance to walk in another’s shoes, and we encourage** students to take advantage of this opportunity as much as possible.

### Sexual Orientation and Identity

While some countries are known for their wide acceptance of homosexuality, the intolerance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer students (LGBTQ) may be extreme in other locations around the world. Please encourage your student to research and understand these cultural views before departing and also consider how he/she will address these challenges. In **some countries, it may be dangerous to be “out.” Don’t be afraid to discuss** concerns with your **student’s** program sponsor. They can assist you and your student in learning as much as possible about the resources in the host country that exist for the LGBT community. For information and resources for LGBTQ students studying abroad, please see the website for the Rainbow Special Interest Group (Rainbow SIG) at <http://www.rainbowsig.org/resource-center/study-abroad/>. (*The Rainbow SIG is made up of LGBTQ professionals from NAFSA: Association of International Educators.*) There are also several online publications and travel books out there to find useful information about LGBTQ international travel.

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities abroad can also be the victims of prejudice and stereotyping while abroad. The disabled report being stared at, ignored, un-assisted, and/or talked down to more frequently abroad than they tend to be in the United States. In many countries, there are no standards or requirements for providing access for the disabled. Wheelchair ramps, handicapped parking spaces, Braille signs, and other aides may be non-existent in parts of the host country, especially rural areas.

In addition to a lack of services provided to the physically disabled, there may also be a lack of services provided to those with a learning disability, those with a psychological or emotional need, or those who are mentally challenged. If your student needs to make special arrangements abroad, it is a good idea to inquire far in advance. The program staff abroad may require some time in order to facilitate your **student's** needs. Skidmore will help facilitate accommodations through the host university, but even though a request that special needs be met, it may be difficult or impossible for the program's staff abroad to assist your student.

*-Information provided by Center for International Studies, University of Missouri –St. Louis' Pre-departure Handbook*

### **Women's Issues Abroad**

Unfortunately, due to popular films and television, American women are commonly stereotyped as sexually promiscuous throughout much of the world. Because of this misconception, students may unwittingly find themselves the object of unwanted attention abroad, whether it is through whistles and stares or more direct propositions. It is important to be aware that in some countries, behavior that could be defined as sexual harassment in the U.S. may actually be perceived as a compliment by both men and women in your host country. This is especially true in Southern European, Latin American and African countries, where whistles and comments about a woman's looks as she walks by can be considered a sign of admiration rather than a demeaning objectification of women.

If possible, encourage your student talk to women from the host culture before leaving the U.S. What are their perspectives of women's issues and rights? Depending on the culture, some women may feel more or less comfortable talking about gender issues. Try to respect the situation these women are coming from, but don't feel that you have to put aside your beliefs and embrace their cultural values. Also, your student should try to be aware of the stereotypes held of American women in that country to know what to expect and have some understanding of why he/she are treated a certain way. There is a wealth of books and websites that have information specifically for the woman traveler. *Journeywoman* is an on-line magazine for women who love to travel (<http://www.journeywoman.com/>). It is dedicated to giving women a space to share their thoughts, experiences, and advice about world travel.

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*-Information provided by Center for International Studies, University of Missouri –St. Louis' Pre-departure Handbook*

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# COMING HOME

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Much of the impact of off campus study comes after the student is back home and have had time to reflect upon their experiences and the insights they have gained. They may see things through a new set of eyes, and maybe even a new set of values. Although travel seminars are limited in their time off campus, they can have a profound effect on some participants.

The signs of re-entry adjustment are similar to what students went through in adapting to their new culture. Students may become critical of home and friends and their apparent disinterest in national issues, foreign affairs or international activities. They experience a feeling of disconnection with those closest to them or become irritable for no reason. They may feel that no one can understand the depth of their experiences. Or they may simply experience a feeling of homesickness for their program site. Just like culture shock, the re-entry adjustment period will pass. Be patient and allow time for adjustment.

OCSE has resources where they can learn to channel their experiences toward their academics and future career development. They can also meet with administrators in Career Development Center and learn how to apply their experience toward a potential career.

## CONCLUSION

**This is an exciting time in your student's academic career! We encourage you to review this** information carefully so that you and your student understand fully the academic and personal adventure that they are embarking upon. If you or your student has any specific questions or concerns that remain unanswered in the preceding text, please do not hesitate to contact our office. We are here to assist your student with this entire process, and we work tirelessly to ensure that their best interests are met.

We wish you and your student the very best!

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# Appendix I - Useful Travel Resources

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## READINGS

*Maximizing Study Abroad*, Michael Paige, Andrew D. Cohen, Barbara Kappler, Julie C. Chi and James P. Lassegard

*Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, Robert Kohl

*Safety and Health Abroad*, John Giordano and Mary Shea

*Lonely Planet Travel Guides* (specific to your country of destination)

*MESA: Minority Experience of Study Abroad*, edited by Pamela Dudzik and Samantha Phillips

*American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Edward Stewart

*Glimpse Magazine* (study abroad stories/resource) <http://www.theglimpse.com/>

## WEBSITES (*Sites subject to change*)

### Travel Information

<http://www.statravel.com>

<http://www.travel.state.gov>

- information about US passports, visas, end entry requirements, including HIV tests
- guide to US embassies: hours, locations, services
- country specific travel warnings and consular information sheets
- <http://www.travlang.com>
- <http://www.studentuniverse.com>

### Money Matters

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

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

### Health Issues

<http://www.who.int/en>

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

- comprehensive site for world travelers, more tourist oriented
- advice and insight on a wide variety of travel health issues
- info about insurance and medical evacuation
- travel stories, photos and audio

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/forums/health>

### Geographic/Cultural Information

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>

### Safety and Security Issues

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

<http://www.armchair.com/info/netinfo.html>

<http://blog.travelworldpassport.com/the-safest-and-most-dangerous-destinations-for-lgbt/>

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# Appendix II: OCSE Emergency Response Protocols

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## Off-Campus Study & Exchanges EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

### DISCLAIMER

This document describes the efforts made by Skidmore College to help participants enhance their safety and to help them respond to emergency situations. Nothing in this plan is a guarantee that any specific action will be taken in any given situation, nor is anything in this document a contract or part of a contract between Skidmore College and any other party, nor is any statement in this document intended to sell a service to a student, nor to attempt to persuade any party to avail themselves of any program or service provided by Skidmore College. Skidmore College will make **every reasonable effort to ensure each student's safety** and well-being in an emergency situation. **However, it should be understood that some events are beyond Skidmore College's control and** therefore the College cannot be held responsible for the outcomes of decisions made during a crisis situation.

### Emergency Contacts

The number for Off-Campus Study & Exchanges is +1.518.580.5355. This number is answered from 8:30 AM - 12:00pm (Noon) and 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday. Outside of office hours students and parents are advised to contact the staff on-site at their program or Campus Safety at +1.518.580.5566. In the event of an emergency, Campus Safety has contact information for OCSE staff. We strongly recommend that student enter these numbers into their cell phones before departing for their program.

### International Study Risk Management Team (ISRMT)

The International Study Risk Management Team is made up of members of the Office of the Dean of Faculty and Vice President of Finance & Administration, the Director of OCSE, the Associate Director of OCSE, and the Director of Campus Safety. These individuals work together to assess emergencies and determine the appropriate emergency protocol(s) to implement; they consult additional offices/staff on campus and on-site as needed and will facilitate communication among all involved parties.

### Public Announcements

In the event of a major crisis, Skidmore will:

- Post a message on the OCSE webpage (<https://www.skidmore.edu/ocse/>)
- Attempt to send e-mail messages to all participants and their guardians/emergency contacts within 48 hours of the event.
- OCSE also may call students and their guardians/emergency contacts depending upon the severity of the emergency.

### Risk Assessment

Skidmore utilizes data from a number of sources for all decisions regarding program operations. In addition to the consular information sheets and advisory messages posted by the U.S. Department of State (<http://www.travel.state.gov>), the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en>), and the CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov>), our resident directors, program directors, and partner institutions use information gathered locally and through conversations with other programs in the host city or country. The U.S.-based staff also uses national and international sources to stay abreast of the progress of any situation and uses this information to determine the appropriate course of action. In making individual decisions concerning participation, we suggest that participants and their parents carefully review the Department of State Travel Advisories web page listed above. The current Skidmore policy does not allow students to participate in any program located in a country in which there is a current Department of State Level 4 (Do Not Travel) Travel Advisory. Study in or travel to a destination with a Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) Travel Advisory is not automatically approved and will require a petition to the International Study Risk Management Team (ISRMT).

OCSE also utilizes the Department of State Travel Advisories as a means for determining when to consider canceling a program or bringing students home from a program.

### Monitoring

**Skidmore's Resident Directors make every reasonable effort to keep abreast of local conditions and changes in local health and safety risks and to inform participants and OCSE of these changes.** Resident Directors and OCSE staff subscribe to the **U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security Services service. The Department's Overseas Security Advisory Council provides daily security updates** which OCSE staff receives. In addition, as all programs are registered with the American Embassy or Interest Section the Resident Directors receive Warden Notices that provide regular updates on safety issues pertinent to the city or country in which the program takes place. The following websites serve as ongoing resources for OCSE:

- U.S. Department of State (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>)
- Center for Disease Control (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov>)
- World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en>)
- SAFETI Clearinghouse (<http://www.globaled.us/safeti>)
- U.S. embassy or consulate in host country (<http://www.usembassy.gov>)
- Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (<http://smartraveller.gov.au>)
- Canadian Department for Foreign Affairs and International Trade (<http://www.international.gc.ca/>)
- Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs (<http://foreignaffairs.gov.ie>)
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.safetravel.govt.nz>)
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>)

Facts and circumstances regarding health and safety in each program locale are constantly changing. OCSE recommends that participants and families consult the aforementioned web sites to monitor the latest available information for a program location.

### Skidmore Program Contingency Plans

Each Skidmore program has a contingency plan which will be activated in case there is a known local condition that requires (a) extra caution, (b) removal of the program to a different site in the same city or country or a nearby country, or (c) suspension of a program and evacuation of

participants. For security reasons these local contingency plans are not available to anyone except the Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges and the International Study Risk Management Team.

### Orientation and Training for Participants

Every Skidmore student studying off-campus attends a mandatory pre-departure orientation and receives a pre-departure handbook. Health and Safety matters are addressed during the orientation and are found in the handbook.

In addition, every Skidmore Program begins on-site with a comprehensive orientation to the host country, city, university, and program, which includes, among other information, an explanation of any local risks that the Resident Director has identified and tips for enhancing personal safety. Each Resident Director also distributes a local emergency contact information card to each participant. Finally, the Resident Director registers the program and each participant with the local U.S. Consulate or Interest Section.

Providers of non-Skidmore Approved Programs also have comprehensive orientations that include explanations of local risks identified by their local staff. Skidmore College is in regular contact with those program providers. In the case of an emergency, many of those providers will contact parents directly. Students on non-Skidmore programs are advised to register with the United States embassy in the country where they will be studying. This can be done on-line prior to departure. Students from countries other than the United States are advised to register with the embassy or consulate of their home country.

### On-Site Care and Insurance

Each Skidmore Resident Director maintains lists of recommended health and mental health providers. All students studying internationally through Skidmore College have emergency medical, repatriation, and evacuation insurance. Skidmore Resident Directors establish an emergency phone tree to be activated in order to contact all participants quickly. OCSE has worked with each Skidmore Resident and Faculty Director to establish protocols to be used in the event of health emergency, serious accident, political crisis, natural disaster, crime, rape, or death of a participant. For security reasons, these documents are not available to the public.

### Advice for Participants and their Families

OCSE has the following advice with students and their families:

- Skidmore College strongly recommends that unless specific situations dictate otherwise, participants should designate their parents as their emergency contacts.
- Participants and their emergency contacts should keep in touch with each other throughout **the participants' time off-campus**.
- Participants should make sure their emergency contacts have their accurate and up-to-date local contact information at all times.
- Participants should immediately notify their emergency contacts in the event of any emergency, accident, serious health problem, or other serious mishap.
- Participants are required to notify the Resident Director in the event of any health condition that lasts longer than a day or two.
- Skidmore College advises participants and their families that communication between Skidmore and any non-Skidmore participants' sending institution is considered **"internal communication"** in terms of the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and that Skidmore College has the right and the obligation to communicate all relevant information concerning **participants' health and safety, academic progress, behavior, etc. to appropriate officers at**

**the student's home institution on a need-to-know basis.** In addition, the Skidmore application to study off-campus specifically authorizes OCSE to communicate any relevant information to **participants' emergency contacts during an emergency.**

- In an emergency, please contact Skidmore College. OCSE can be reached during office hours (8:30am-12pm and 1pm-4:30pm) at (518) 580-5355. Outside of office hours, please telephone Campus Safety at (518) 580-5566. Campus Safety will contact the on-duty staff person. The college will work with you to determine appropriate steps.

*This document is adapted from the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) Emergency Preparedness Plan.*

## **Creative Thought Matters**

**OFF-CAMPUS STUDY & EXCHANGES**  
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