Preparing to Go Abroad Orientation
Use this script to follow along with the online presentation.

Slide 1 - Introduction
Welcome to the Preparing to Go Abroad Orientation for study abroad. You can refer to information in this session as needed during your study abroad preparation and experience. As well as this online orientation, you are expected to attend an in person orientation session as well. Options to complete this task are explained in your MyStudyAbroad account.

Slide 2 – MyStudyAbroad
Your MyStudyAbroad account is the main source for all information related to your study abroad program. In this account you will find your handbooks, submit your course information, access your health insurance card and see other resources available to you as you go through the process of studying abroad.

One of the most important sources of information found in this account is the “Study Abroad Handbook” located in the Handbooks section of your account.

You should become familiar and regularly check the information in your MyStudyAbroad account.

Slide 3 - Academics
You will remain enrolled as a full-time, degree seeking student at UW for the duration of your study abroad program. Our office will register you in a study abroad placeholder course for the term that you will be abroad. It is important that you do not register for classes here at UW and that you clear any holds on your account.

Remember to talk with your academic advisor before you depart to discuss the courses you are planning to take and to be sure you are staying on track with your academic plan. You may be registering for your next semester while you are abroad so you will want to have an idea of what courses you should register for.

All courses taken abroad will appear on your UW-Madison transcript and will receive a UW equivalent course. You will receive credits and a letter grade for every course you take abroad. Your MyStudyAbroad account will include specific information regarding how your credit and grade equivalents are determined, either in your program-specific handbook, or a document called Academic Notes. Keep in mind most academic policies that exist on campus apply to your study abroad program, including the pass/fail policy. For more information on this policy and other academic policies, refer to your Study Abroad Handbook in your MyStudyAbroad account.

Once you have confirmed the courses that you are taking while abroad, you will request a specific UW equivalent for each course you are taking in the Academics tile. For some short-term programs, your course equivalent may be selected for you, but you need to log in to confirm the selection. It is possible that some of the courses you are taking will already be pre-approved, meaning a UW student has taken the course before, therefore you’re able to select your course equivalent from the pre-approved list. If the course you are taking is not pre-approved, you will need to upload your syllabus into MyStudyAbroad so it can be sent to the appropriate department for review. Syllabi are important and need to be comprehensive in order for the course to be considered. This includes listing the
bibliography, weekly breakdown of topics covered in the course, how you are assessed, etc. Follow the
instructions in MyStudyAbroad when it comes time to enter your course information.

**Slide 4 – Financial**
Within the Financial tile of your MyStudyAbroad account, you will find your program cost sheet. Your
cost sheet provides important details of what your program will cost including the cancellation and
withdrawal policies and billing timeline.

Review your program cost sheet carefully. The program fee listed is the fee that you will be
electronically billed from the UW Madison Bursar’s Office according to the payment schedule listed. The
estimated additional expenses are the expenses that we anticipate the average student would need to
pay out of pocket for this study abroad program.

If you have any financial aid or scholarships, that funding will most likely be automatically deducted
from your program fee when you receive your ebill. You will then either owe the remaining balance or
receive a refund check. We advise you to check with your scholarship provider to confirm that it can be
used for study abroad and to clarify how it will be dispersed to you. Questions about financial aid
should be addressed to the Office of Student Financial Aid.

We encourage you to pay close attention to the cancellation fee section of your program cost sheet to
understand what fees you would owe if you decided to cancel from your program.

**Slide 5 – Staying Healthy**
Before you leave the United States, it is important to prepare for your journey by taking certain health
precautions. You should educate yourself about health and safety in your travel destination by
consulting the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website. There is a link to this website in your
MyStudyAbroad under the Pre-departure tab. The CDC will provide an overview of what immunizations
are recommended for US citizens traveling to your country as well as tips and suggestions on how to
stay healthy.

It’s important to discuss your intentions to travel abroad with your healthcare provider to make a plan
for maintaining your personal health while abroad. We strongly recommend that you schedule have a
medical examination, including eye and dental checks, before you depart. University Health Services
(UHS) has a travel clinic that provides health services for patients who are planning foreign travel,
including vaccines and immunizations; however; it is important to make an appointment as early as
possible as the appointment times fill up quickly each semester.

If you take prescription medications regularly or expect to take some while abroad, make sure to bring a
sufficient supply with you for the duration of your program. Ask your doctor about the availability
abroad of any prescription medications you take regularly. It is illegal in many places to send and receive
a prescription in the mail, and you may not find the exact same prescription abroad. If you have any
questions, contact your Study Abroad Advisor.

**Slide 6 – CISI Insurance**
Health insurance is included in your program fee and is provided by Cultural Insurance Services
International (CISI). Detailed coverage information and policy descriptions defining the coverage terms
are available in your MyStudyAbroad. CISI provides medical evacuation and repatriation benefits and
covers you when traveling to other countries. Coverage of pre-existing health conditions has special
provisions so refer to your CISI brochure for details on the provisions for coverage eligibility. Your
coverage will be in effect for the duration of your program. You may extend your coverage up to one month by contacting CISI directly.

You should check with your current health insurance provider to see if you are covered while on your program. We encourage you to arrange for continuation of your regular health insurance coverage while you are studying abroad.

Doctors and hospitals outside of the U.S. often expect immediate cash payment for health services. You will want to be prepared to pay up front for care that you might receive while abroad. If you receive care, make sure to get a receipt. You will turn in your receipt and a claim form for reimbursement to CISI.

Instructions for printing your insurance card will be available in MyStudyAbroad. You will also get an email directly from CISI when you are enrolled. The insurance brochure and claim form are also located in the account.

**Slide 7 - Safety**
We are dedicated to maintaining the personal safety and security for each study abroad participant. While all risks cannot be eliminated, we take numerous steps toward ensuring that our programs operate safely. Your well-being abroad also depends on you and the choices you make to mitigate risk. The following are some safety preparations you can do.

All study abroad participants who are U.S. citizens are required to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) with the U.S. State Department. Register now at https://step.state.gov/step/. If you are not a U.S. citizen, we strongly encourage you to register with your home country’s embassy.

Before you leave the United States, print your emergency card located in your MyStudyAbroad. This card contains UW-Madison and program specific emergency contact information. If you find yourself in an emergency while abroad, you should contact the appropriate on-site staff immediately. As they are nearest to you and know the local resources, these individuals are best equipped to assist you in a timely manner. All on-site staff have our office’s contact information and will follow-up appropriately. However, if an on-site staff member cannot be reached you should contact our office at UW-Madison for assistance.

All communication from us is sent to your wisc email account. If necessary, we will send important updates to this email and ask that you continue to monitor the account while you are abroad. Make sure to keep in touch with us and your family/friends. Keep in mind that U.S. news media coverage sometimes makes situations look very different than what you are actually experiencing. Family and friends also might not understand where you are in comparison to where things are that they see on the news, so make sure to communicate often back home.

All students who travel abroad are asked to have a working international cellular phone. You can do this by adding an international capability to your current cellular plan, purchasing a temporary phone (either in the U.S. or at your destination) or by adding an international sim card to your phone that is programmed for your destination. Once your contact information (phone and address) abroad are known, enter that information in the provided section of your MyStudyAbroad. In case of emergency, we can use this information to contact you.
Make yourself familiar with the safety conditions of your host country and any other countries you plan to visit. Most large cities as well as remote areas, in the U.S. and abroad, suffer from common crimes. Students should use the same precautions abroad that they would in any large metropolitan area. Keep away and avoid participating in demonstrations and other political activities while abroad. We monitor safety conditions worldwide and work closely with our partners abroad. We will forward important U.S. State Department announcements regarding potential safety issues in your host country (such as natural disasters, protests, large gatherings) directly to you. However, your on-site staff will also communicate this information to you. It is important that you always read the information carefully and follow the instructions given to you.

It is important to note that cross-cultural differences exist in the consumption of alcohol. Be aware of the perceptions related to alcohol in your host country to avoid finding yourself in an unsafe situation. Drinking alcohol can seem deceptively harmless, especially when you travel to countries where attitudes, customs, and drinking age may be different from the U.S. Nevertheless, excessive alcohol consumption impairs your judgment and can lead to disruptive behavior and risk of harm to yourself and to others, in addition to poor academic performance. You should never feel pressured to drink if you do not want to or feel embarrassed to order non-alcoholic beverages.

Educate yourself about the customs, etiquette, and laws of your host country. You are responsible for obeying local laws and the UW-Madison Code of Conduct while abroad. Illegal, irresponsible drinking and/or misbehaving while drinking are violations of the University’s policy. In addition, UW-Madison has a no tolerance approach to drug use while abroad. Students using drugs abroad may immediately be removed from the program at their own cost.

Carefully review your program materials for additional tips regarding health & safety abroad. Talk with study abroad staff if you have any questions about your host country customs, etiquettes, and laws.

**Slide 8 – Travel Documents**

A valid passport valid for at least 6 months past the end date of your program is required in order to travel abroad. In addition to a passport, each country has certain entry requirements. Some countries require that you apply for a visa before you leave the US. Others will require you to apply for a visa or residence permit in country. A visa is an endorsement on a passport indicating that the holder is allowed to enter, leave, or stay for a specified period of time in a country. To determine if you need to apply for a visa, check MyStudyAbroad.

It is your responsibility to keep up-to-date about student visa requirements for your host country, and if required, to apply for and receive a visa from your host country’s consulate or embassy. Note for some countries, you may have to travel to the consulate or embassy in person.

If you are studying at UW-Madison on a student visa from another country, your US visa may be affected by your stay overseas. It is your responsibility to contact the UW-Madison International Student Services office to learn more about how your visa to study in the United States will be affected by your study overseas, and follow the procedures accordingly. The process or requirements for obtaining a visa for the country you plan to study in may also be different. Work with your Study Abroad Advisor and research this information on your own.
Students traveling internationally are required to pass through customs and immigration in their host country and upon return to the United States. Immigration officials will check your passport and visa (if required), so carry these items with you.

**Slide 9 – Money Matters**

Accessing money abroad can seem like an overwhelming challenge at first, but most students find that it is easier than they anticipated.

Be sure to call your credit or debit card company and bank before you leave the US to let them know that you will be studying abroad. They will be able to mark your account to reflect that you are overseas. This will help avoid the company or bank shutting down your account because they think your card was stolen. When you call, you will also want to confirm that your card is enabled for use abroad, and what the transaction fees are for using your card.

We also suggest that you copy or scan and save all credit and debit cards that you plan to use abroad. You might even wish to share these documents with a family or friend at home. That way if your card is taken by an ATM or stolen, your contact in the US can call and cancel the card and help issue a new one to you. Consider leaving other copies or scans of important documents, such as your passport, visa, address abroad, CISI insurance information with your emergency contact in the US.

Having multiple sources of accessing funds is important. Most students will use a credit or debit card and some local currency.

We suggest that you know the currency of the country you will be studying in as well as the exchange rate. To check the current rate in your country and to print out a Traveler’s Cheat Sheet, you can go to oanda.com at the link listed here.

ATM machines have become more readily available throughout the world. Bring an ATM card to access your U.S. account(s) and set up online banking if available. Consult your financial institution before departure to discuss fees and withdrawal limits. It may be possible to increase your withdrawal limit if you plan on withdrawing large sums of money to pay your rent, etc. The most common way for students to access funds while abroad is through a debit card at a local ATM machine. You can see what network your ATM card is on by looking at the back of the card. There are two main networks: Plus and Cirrus. You can do some web research before going abroad to see where you should be able to use your card based on your ATM network.

We recommend that you have insurance to cover damage or theft to your personal property abroad. Check with your insurance company or contact any insurance company that provides home or renter's insurance to learn more about the extent of coverage possible for personal property that you take with you.

**Slide 10-Your Identity**

Matters of personal identity can impact all students on a study abroad program. For some, it may be the first time you are a minority in your community. For others, you might notice you are getting attention based on your identity, either positive or negative. How you identify yourself in the U.S. may not be how you’re identified abroad. As a student on a study abroad experience, you may first be identified as a U.S. American by people in your host country, which may be different than how you classify yourself in the U.S.
We encourage all students to think about the parts that make up their identity. Parts of your identity may be more easily observed by others, while other parts of your identity are less observable. How will you want to talk or not talk about those parts of your identity with people in your host country? How will you react if someone comments on an easily observable part of your identity in a way that offends you? Think about how the parts of your identity might impact your values. Will your identity change while abroad? We encourage you to look through our identity resources and to speak with a study abroad advisor about your questions before studying abroad. You have resources available to you in MyStudyAbroad.

Slide 11 – Culture Curve
While abroad, you will face cultural differences on a daily basis. As you continue through your time abroad, you will move through various stages of adjusting to the new culture. Most students will experience some combination of the cultural curve, represented in this slide, although it will vary by student.

As you anticipate leaving home, you may feel various emotions of excitement, enthusiasm, and concern. These emotions may be accompanied by a loss of interest in your current responsibilities and general tiredness.

At the beginning of your abroad experience, things may seem exhilarating and exciting. You may have a curiously positive outlook on the country but you may also experience minor insomnia and/or intestinal disturbances as you physically adjust to a new environment.

After some time, you may begin to feel bewilderment, disenchantment, restlessness, and impatience as you become aware of more and more cultural differences. At this time you may search for security in familiar activities and may suffer from colds, headaches and tiredness.

Restlessness and impatience can lead into a negative attitude of aggression and hostility at this time, often referred to as culture shock. You may experience an uneven work performance, boredom, homesickness, or extreme sensitivity and irritability. At this time, the tendency is to withdraw from host nationals and you may also experience minor illnesses.

As your new surroundings and life abroad become familiar and comfortable, your work performance likely improves and you develop a sense of belonging in the culture. You may develop increased empathy and an ability to see things from the perspective of host nationals while in the adjusting phase.

Upon arrival home, you may experience a general attitude of ambivalence and a state of disorientation. You may want to tell others about your experience and find others generally not very interested. It is not uncommon to feel disconnected and depressed at this time, and to begin to criticize home and friends.

For tips and suggestions on how to process through the various cultural experiences you will be going through, see the section on cultural adjustment in the Study Abroad Handbook.

Slide 12 – Next Steps
Before embarking on your study abroad experience, it is very helpful to learn as much as you can about your host country. Politics, current events, and contemporary cultural issues are often subjects of class discussion or conversations with your host family. The more you prepare prior to departure, the more you can contribute to discussions in your host country.
Another way to learn more about your program is by contacting UW students who have participated on the program in the past. You can access the Returned Student Network under the Student Voices tab on our website.

It is possible that there are other UW Madison students participating on your program. If there are, you can access their email addresses in your My Study Abroad account.

For more information about travel, packing, communication while abroad, and much, much more check out your Study Abroad Handbook in MyStudyAbroad.

We hope you have a safe and rewarding time abroad. We look forward to hearing from you!