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By understanding each other’s feelings and supporting decisions before, during, and after the period of overseas study, you can help maximize this opportunity. Here is some advice on what to expect (we’ve been seeing study abroad transformations in action for more than 60 years).

pre-departure dos

If you want to help your student prepare, make plans to take care of the following necessities together:

- understanding program policies
- travel documents
- health preparations
- financial preparations
- insurance
- travel planning
- how to get in touch while abroad
- what to do in case of emergency
- collecting a data file

keep up-to-date stateside

You may have to help handle some things for your son or daughter while he or she is abroad, such as:

- renewing a driver’s license
- registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot
- filing income taxes
- paying monthly credit card bills
- preparing for the next semester at the home school
  (open mail from the college and remind your student)
  - registering for classes
  - selecting a housing option
  - preparing forms to continue financial aid

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final words
Make sure you are informed if your student runs into difficulty overseas. Since students are almost always adults (over 18 years of age), you will not receive that information unless you are designated as his or her emergency contact. In some cases, even that is not sufficient, so you may want to have him or her sign a release form as a precaution.

Discuss how you will handle any family emergencies that may arise. It's best to have a written emergency communication plan listing the methods of communication to use and the order in which to use them. Give your student a copy of the plan, which should include: all family telephone numbers, access codes for messages on family answering machines, phone numbers for several out-of-state relatives, and several e-mail addresses, including a backup address at an overseas provider such as Yahoo! Australia.

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- doctors who have treated your student in the past
- citizenship section of the embassy or consulate nearest your student's program
- U.S. State Dept. Office of Overseas Citizen Services
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3. If studying abroad was your idea to begin with, be sure not to push too hard. Every year, program directors hear complaints from students who didn't want to come in the first place—and those students experience more difficulty than others adjusting to the new environment. In fact, some never do.

4. Maintain a level of distance. It is by overcoming any difficulties that your son or daughter will quickly rise to a new level of independence, so avoid the temptation to become too involved. Ultimately, this is his or her learning experience. Also, it's important to remember that study abroad students are not on vacation. Attending class with him or her—or taking your student out of class to sightsee—will interrupt the educational process and immersion experience. If you want to visit, it's best to do so when the program has finished so you can travel together. And it's not usually wise to try to obtain permission for your student to return home early, the end of the semester is the most important part of his or her academic experience.
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Decide with your son or daughter how to access money for both everyday financial needs and emergencies. Certain monetary instruments may be preferable in certain destinations, so ask your program provider for more specific recommendations. Generally, it’s important to ask your bank how [or if] its ATM card will function abroad and what extra fees there might be. A personal credit card with cash advances or traveler’s checks could also make sense. Then, make arrangements to pay any monthly bills and, if necessary, to file your son or daughter’s income taxes.

insurance
Continue carrying your student as a dependent on your health insurance policy, even if he or she will have other coverage while studying abroad. Be aware that in many countries the cost of medical services must be paid in advance by the patient (and then reimbursed by insurance). Insure valuables your son or daughter will take on the trip, such as a laptop computer, camera, or video recorder. Also consider tuition, trip, travel, and luggage insurance. Move him or her not to bring irreplacable objects such as family jewelry.

travel planning
Research travel costs and book flights. Learn regulations regarding the type and size of luggage that can be carried, and help your son or daughter pack light. Be aware of any restrictions the tickets you purchase may have (such as a change policy). A money belt can help keep valuables safe during the trip.

contact planning
Make sure you have a telephone number where you can reach your student and know the times of day when he or she is most likely to be there. Minimize the cost of staying in touch by establishing methods in advance. Contact your phone service provider to arrange for a calling card, research international phone options, or learn the most inexpensive way to call collect or wirelessly from the destination country. You may be able to select an international plan that has reduced calling rates to that particular country to maximize costs of calling from home. Given the cost of telephoning, it might be better to set up a regular schedule for e-mailing or instant messaging instead.

unescorted
Make sure you will be informed if your student runs into difficulty overseas. Since students are almost always adults (over 18 years of age), you will not receive that information unless you are designated as his or her emergency contact. In some cases, even that is not sufficient, so you may want to have him or her sign a release form as a precaution.

Discuss how you will handle any family emergencies that may arise. It’s best to have a written emergency communication plan listing the methods of communication to use and the order in which to use them. Give your student a copy of the plan, which should include: all family telephone numbers, access codes for messages on family answering machines, phone numbers for several out-of-state relatives, and several e-mail addresses, including a backup address at an overseas provider such as Yahoo! Australia.

data file
Gather all of the information you and your student might need while he or she is away, including:

• contact information for
  • your student (if housing has been assigned)
  • on-site Resident Director
  • home office of the program provider (ask if they have a 24-hour emergency number)
  • study abroad office at the home school
  • doctors who have treated your student in the past
• insurance policy numbers and how to submit claims
• your student’s credit card numbers
• your student’s passport number
• duplicate lost passport kit (your student should take one abroad as well) containing:
  • two passport photos
  • official copy of his or her birth certificate
  • photocopy of passport’s photo, signature, and visa pages
• program calendar

encourage, but don’t push
Before your student leaves, offer your full support. Let him or her know that you will be there throughout the experience if needed, including that you can still be reached from overseas.

Time abroad often begins with a honeymoon period during which students are excited to finally be in the setting that they were eager to experience for many wonderful things as well, even if you are not the first to hear about them. In most cases, he or she won’t expect you to solve problems—as much as you may want to—and is just looking for an understanding ear.

If studying abroad was your idea to begin with, be sure not to push too hard. Every year, program directors hear complaints from students who didn’t want to come in the first place—and those students experience more difficulty than others adjusting to the new environment. In fact, some never do.

maintain a level of distance
It is by overcoming any difficulties that your son or daughter will quickly rise to a new level of independence, so avoid the temptation to become too involved. Ultimately, this is his or her learning experience.

Also, it’s important to remember that study abroad students are not on vacation. Attending class with him or her—or taking your student out of class to sightsee—will interrupt the educational process and immersion experience. If you want to visit, it’s best to do so when the program has finished so you can travel together. And it’s not usually wise to try to obtain permission for your student to return home early the end of the semester is the most important part of his or her academic experience.
Studying abroad will almost certainly be a defining period in your son or daughter’s educational experience—a psychological journey that will transform him or her into a global thinker with international perspectives and put him or her a step ahead of the competition in the eyes of prospective employers. In spite of this, you—and your son or daughter—may have a wide range of feelings about the upcoming experience, from excitement at its potential to stress at the idea of being far apart.

By understanding each other’s feelings and supporting decisions before, during, and after the period of overseas study, you can help maximize this opportunity. Here is some advice on what to expect (we’ve been seeing study abroad transformations in action for more than 60 years).

**Parents pointers to prepare for the transformation**

**pre-departure dos**

If you want to help your student prepare, make plans to take care of the following necessities together:

- understanding program policies
- travel documents
- health preparations
- financial preparations
- insurance
- travel planning
- how to get in touch while abroad
- what to do in case of emergency
- collecting a data file

**keep up-to-date stateside**

You may have to help handle some things for your son or daughter while he or she is abroad, such as:

- renewing a driver’s license
- registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot
- filing income taxes
- paying monthly credit card bills
- preparing for the next semester at the home school (open mail from the college and remind your student)
  - registering for classes
  - selecting a housing option
  - preparing forms to continue financial aid

Additional copies and displays are available upon request.

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