



## **For Parents:**

ACCENT encourages parental support in their son or daughter's study abroad experience. While it's great to have help, it is ultimately the students who are responsible for getting themselves to their destination of choice. One of the most challenging, but rewarding, parts of the study abroad experience is the process of enrollment, acceptance and paperwork. Becoming more independent and managing all of the tasks on one's own are important steps for a student!

## **FAQ's:**

### **Preparing for Departure:**

#### **Why should my son/daughter study abroad?**

While study abroad can seem like an extraneous activity, the experience and insight that your son or daughter can gain is invaluable to their education and life. Study abroad aids students in many ways. It gives them an opportunity to learn about a new culture, a new language and new ways of thinking. While gaining this exposure, students become more independent and develop a greater sense of self-confidence. Study abroad can also make a student more marketable to an employer after college. In an increasingly globalizing world, the more international experience one has will always be considered a great asset and job skill.

#### **How will my son/daughter get money while they are abroad?**

Students should refer to their pre-departure handbook for a specific list how to access money while overseas. ACCENT recommends having different ways of accessing money available so in case of an emergency, there is a second or third option. Make sure your son or daughter contacts their bank and credit card companies to tell them they will be abroad and for what period of time. This can help avoid their bank putting a hold on their account because of "suspicious" international activity.

#### **When should I expect to hear from my son/daughter once they have arrived? How will I know they are OK?**

Although ACCENT encourages students to call home when they arrive overseas, many students are either too tired or do not have access to a phone immediately, and thus do not call home on arrival day. We recommend setting up a time and date with your son or

daughter by which they will have called so you can know that they are OK. This will help to alleviate any concern as you wait to hear from them.

### **Is studying abroad safe? What steps does ACCENT take to ensure my child's safety?**

While there are always risks when traveling and studying abroad, ACCENT takes students' safety very seriously and acts in every possible manner to ensure that your son or daughter has a safe and comfortable experience abroad. All ACCENT Center Directors are wardens of the American embassy in their country and will update students should there be any safety situation. As well, ACCENT has a contingency plan in case of emergency. Students receive this information upon arrival and are directed on what to do and where to go should such a situation arise.

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of safety at all times and to act in a mature and adult manner in order to avoid possible hazardous situations. It is a good idea for students to be sensitive and adaptable to cultural differences. The more they stand out as a tourist the more they may be a target for harassment.

### **What kind of insurance does my son/daughter need in order to study abroad?**

Students should go overseas with comprehensive health insurance. If you are unsure of the coverage abroad, please contact the health insurance company for further information. ACCENT also recommends that students look into buying travel and personal property insurance while abroad. ACCENT can provide you with a list of companies that provide all types of insurance to study abroad participants, if requested.

### **While your son/daughter is abroad:**

#### **How can I help my son/daughter deal with culture shock upon arrival?**

The first couple of days in a new place can be disorienting for a student. Combine this with unfamiliar situations, jet lag, and overall tiredness from traveling, and your son or daughter may seem disappointed with their host country upon arrival. Culture shock is a normal process and is a positive sign that your son or daughter is starting to learn about a new culture. Be supportive of your son or daughter, but keep an open mind when they report on their surroundings. Students tend to be emotional and exaggerate a situation upon arrival. This may cause unnecessary concern, when in fact everything is fine. Of course, ACCENT is dedicated to helping every student, and if there is a problem please encourage your son or daughter to go into the ACCENT Center for help. The ACCENT staff is always ready to help students and is better equipped to deal with their needs directly. They are also a great resource for helping with housing problems or recommending a good vegetarian restaurant!

## **How often will I communicate, and by what means, with my son/daughter? Should I be concerned if I don't hear from them often?**

While studying abroad, most students' primary means of communication with home is via email. Please keep in mind that email may not be as readily accessible to students overseas as it is in the United States. However, students will have access to email at the ACCENT Centers Monday – Friday during regular business hours. Students may have internet access in their housing, and if not, there are internet cafes in every city that are not usually too costly. More information on computers, email and internet use is available in your son or daughter's pre-departure handbook.

Many students buy cell phones once overseas. European cell phones are on a 'pay as you go' system and it is free to receive calls. Alternatively, your son or daughter may have a phone in their housing, you should check with your son or daughter to see if this is an option. If so, they will receive more information on how to use their phone upon arrival at their overseas orientation. You may also wish to purchase a calling card to call your son or daughter overseas, in order to keep call charges to a minimum. More information on cell phones and calling cards is included in your son or daughter's pre-departure handbook.

While communication should not be difficult, keep in mind that you may not hear from your son or daughter everyday. They will be busy absorbing the culture and having new adventures and may not remember or have time to contact you as often as they do at home. Many students also try to distance or separate themselves from their home support network in order to build a local network and more completely immerse themselves in their study abroad experience. Don't worry, this is normal, and a good sign that your son or daughter is getting as much as possible out of their time overseas.

## **Once your son or daughter returns:**

### **How can I help my son/daughter deal with reverse culture shock upon return?**

Before you know it, your son or daughter will be back at home and missing that great *boulangerie* right around the corner from their housing. Students go through a period of adjustment upon returning to the US, similar to what they experienced upon arrival in their host country. Keep in mind that your son or daughter has just had an amazing new experience and may not be ready for it to be over. They may try to cling to traditions and routines that they held while abroad. Don't worry, this is normal, and it will pass. Be patient and supportive. Most of all, really listen when your son or daughter describes their experience abroad. Many students feel like no one is really interested in hearing what they have to say upon returning. Remember that studying abroad has opened your son or daughter's horizons and introduced them to new experiences they didn't even know existed. No matter what their experience abroad, they will have changed, and hopefully gained a broader perspective of the world!