

Re-entry Handbook

Welcome back to the United States! You have just completed an experience that will stay with you for the rest of your life. Some students will find the transition back to life in the U.S. relatively easy, while others will experience some difficulties. Regardless of your situation, our aim is to provide you with information that will help ease your reentry.

This handbook will help guide you through some practical details about returning to the university, such as credit transfers, registration, and housing; dealing with reverse culture shock and other types of emotional stress commonly experienced by study abroad returnees; and shares personal accounts of the re-entry process by past Iowa study abroad participants. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, tips are provided on how to integrate the lessons and experiences from your time abroad into your life in the US.

Back at the University of Iowa

The following section covers the practical details of credit and grade transfer, registration, housing and employment.

Credit and grade transfer

Due to the large variety of programs in which our students participate, it is difficult to make general statements that cover all situations regarding credit transfer. Instead, we have identified three broad categories into which most programs fall in order to provide you with the specific information relevant to you.

1. You were registered at the University of Iowa during your study abroad with a course number provided by the Office for Study Abroad. (If on a Reciprocal Exchange, see #3.)

You are not required to do anything. Credit and grades will be reported directly to the Office for Study Abroad, which will report them to the Registrar. These credits will appear on your record, broken down into specific courses. This may take some time to process so, in the meantime, a blanket, one-line registration will serve as temporary indication of your participation in the program. *By two months into the following session at Iowa*, it is wise to check your record; if the breakdown has not yet been posted, get in touch with your study abroad adviser.

2. You were enrolled in a program sponsored by another U.S. university.

In most cases, it is your responsibility to make sure your program sponsor has sent a transcript to the University of Iowa. Hopefully you have already completed a transcript release form along with other paperwork from the sponsoring school (if not, contact your UI study abroad adviser right away!), and an official transcript will be sent to either the UI Registrar or the study abroad office. Transcripts from the sponsoring school should be sent to: Transfer Credit Officer, Office for Study Abroad, 1111 University Capitol Centre, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, 52242. Grade reporting must pass through several different offices, so it typically takes about two months for transcripts to arrive to the University of Iowa and appear on your degree evaluation.

Soon into the following semester back at Iowa, check with the Registrar to see if your transcript has been received. *If it has been more than two months since the conclusion of your program*, it is wise to check with the programs stateside office to find out what is causing the delay and whether there is something you need to do.

3. You were **directly enrolled** at a host university and will be presenting an academic document from it, rather than something produced by a program-sponsoring office.

If you have not already done so, provide UI adviser Maria Hope (maria-hope@uiowa.edu) with a list of the courses you completed abroad that you expect to transfer for credit. The list should include all of the following information for each course:

Course Title:
Department:.....
Instructor's name:
Basis on which final grade will be given (paper, exam, other):.....

Verify with the exchange coordinator or foreign student office of the host institution that your records have been sent to the University of Iowa. Check with UI adviser Maria Hope to make sure that your records, when received, are complete and accurate. Be prepared to produce supplementary documentation (papers, exams etc.). Obtaining revised records – in the case of errors – can take a surprisingly long time, so do not put it off.

Important note for all students: Credit from study abroad is initially recorded as elective credit at the end of your Degree Evaluation report sheets. Once special approvals go through the Office for Study Abroad or your department, relevant classes will be moved to satisfy specific credit.

The Study Abroad Credit Approval Form (CAF), which you completed before you left, addresses issues regarding approval towards outstanding requirements. Review your copy of the CAF to check whether the information is still correct. It is not unusual to take different courses abroad than initially planned; in most cases it is irrelevant and elective credit is earned anyway. The CAF form is a preliminary approval. Final approval usually occurs by departmental memo to the Office of Graduation Analysis in the Registrar. Approvals marked “pending” and course changes towards the major will require a new review by your adviser. If in doubt, contact the Office for Study Abroad to see whether it is necessary for you to make further arrangements.

Registration

Hopefully, you have gone through early registration and only need to make minor adjustments. If this is not the case, you must get in touch with your advisor or department *immediately* to obtain the proper registration codes. Look in the course schedule or on ISIS for the current course listings. If you have not registered by this point, do so as soon as you can! Availability may be limited at this point.

Housing

Residence halls have typically been filled by now; it is unlikely that spaces are still available. Of course, it never hurts to check; contact University Housing at residence-services@uiowa.edu.

There are multiple places to look for off-campus housing, including the classified sections of local newspapers, postings around town, the Housing Clearinghouse at the IMU, and on the Office for Study Abroad website (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~uiabroad/APARTMENTS.html>). The Housing Clearinghouse Apartment Directory is available online imu.uiowa.edu/cic/housing_info/ and in printed form at the Campus Information Center.

Employment

There are many on-campus and off-campus jobs in Iowa City. You can visit the Jobnet website at <<http://www.uiowa.edu/financial-aid/jobnet/>> or call 335-1460.

One excellent employment option is to become a peer adviser in the Office for Study Abroad. Peer advisers use their study abroad experience to help guide University of Iowa students through the study abroad process and help promote study abroad through a variety of outreach events on and off campus. Individually assigned responsibilities are based on each peer advisers' interest and experience and may include graphic design support, development of handouts and newsletters, outreach and publicity, and program administration.

The office typically hires several new Peer Advisors at the beginning of the academic year, though occasionally there is an opening in January. Applications are accepted until the positions are filled and may be picked up at the Office for Study Abroad, 1111 University Capitol Centre, or can be downloaded at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~uiabroad/returning/RETURNINGpeer.html>. Applicants are interviewed in August just prior to or immediately after the start of classes.

Qualified applicants will be undergraduates, have previous participation in a study abroad program, demonstrated interest in promoting international education, and excellent interpersonal communications skills. Desired skills include writing, graphic design and desktop publishing experience, public speaking experience, good computer skills, demonstrated clerical skills, and an eagerness to promote study abroad.

Peer advisers typically work 8-15 hours per week while classes are in session. Scheduled work hours will include times during 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, and additional hours for other assignments, weekly staff meetings and resource room maintenance. All peer advisers will occasionally be asked to take part in weekend or evening activities.

The Process of Re-entry

Re-entry problems vary for different people. Some have troubles re-adjusting to the American university system, while others have difficulty reconnecting with friends and family. Past Iowa returnees were asked what they thought to be the most pressing issue upon return, and the following are some of the answers:

- Finding a place to live for second semester
- Catching up on important things that happened in family members' or friends' lives
- Money and job matters
- Registering for classes
- Re-entry culture shock
- Dealing with changed relationships
- Having to deal with the "American-ness" of everything
- Getting transcripts and transferring credit
- Getting back into a routine

Reverse Culture Shock and Readjustment

Reverse culture shock is a common phenomenon among world travelers. It refers to "the temporal psychological difficulties that a returnee experiences in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for some time." (Uehara in Raschio, 1987).

When you prepared for going abroad, you may have learned about the U-curve of cultural adjustment in the host country. First you could expect excitement, then disgruntlement, and then you would go upward again toward adjustment to your host culture. After careful observations,

researchers have come to the conclusion that the U is only half of the picture. In reality, the adjustment curve has *two* dips, making it a W-curve. The second half can surprise the unwary traveler when returning home. While we expect to easily slide back into our familiar life in the United States, we are often thoroughly unprepared for the homecoming blues, and this phase can cause even greater distress than the culture shock in the host country. The routines, norms and values of your host country have become part of your expectations; you are used to doing things a certain way, and now you are expected to slide right back into American habits. The more successful you were at making your place abroad your home, the harder it can be to readjust to your old (new?) environment.

Furthermore, after having been exposed to a different culture, some aspects of life in the U.S. that you never paid attention to before suddenly may seem really odd. Common impressions include the seeming abundance of “stuff” in the U.S., the fast pace of life, and the superficiality of interactions. Although this may cause some stress and frustration at first, you will readjust in time.

Here are some comments made by past returnees regarding initial readjustment:

- I lacked the motivation for a serious work ethic, rushing about, or constantly doing something.
- Everything seemed so organized and rushed.
- Driving on the other side of the road again was strange.
- I have a different outlook on how I see the U.S. and how I relate to society.
- At first, I slept a lot and was very depressed and irritable.
- Getting used to a lack of public transportation was difficult.
- I didn't have too many problems, just catching up with friends.
- People didn't want to hear about the rest of the world.

Many people are frustrated upon return as a result of the conflicting attitudes and values between the U.S. and the host country. Remember that you have the advantage of knowing two value systems now, which is a privilege only those who travel have and can use.

School

Returning to academics at the University of Iowa can be a surprise in itself. You have grown accustomed to the ways of operation at your host institution and perhaps even prefer them, and now have to cope with adjusting to what was formerly familiar. Perhaps you find classes to be less challenging now, or too rigorous. The teaching styles and classroom structures likely differ from those in your host country, leaving you unsure of how to fit into academic life here. One solution to this frustration is to consider applying some of the coursework you took abroad to a new major, minor or certificate at the UI.

International Studies Major – This major is designed for students who are interested in keeping up with the ever-changing intersections of culture, politics, economics, and language in our world. The multi-disciplinary program includes a wide array of courses in the humanities and social sciences and offers emphases in the following areas:

- African Studies
- Caribbean Studies
- East Asian Studies
- European Studies
- Latin American Studies
- Russian, East European, Eurasian Studies
- South Asian Studies
- Development
- Global Artistic Tradition and Change
- Global Resources and the Environment
- Global Health
- Human Rights
- International Business
- International Communication and Information
- International Relations Politics
- International Writing and Translation
- Postcolonial and Diasporic Studies
- War, Peace and Security

A minor is also available.

Director: Martha Greer, Phone: 335-1436

For more information, contact the Academic Advising Center, 1100 Quadrangle Hall, Phone: 353-5700

See <http://www.uiowa.edu/~intl/studies> for more details.

Certificate in Global Health Studies – A certificate designed to give both undergraduate and graduate students in the health and social sciences the theoretical and experiential background they will need to be competitive in the international job market. A minor is also available.

http://www.uiowa.edu/~intl/ACAD/ghsp/GHSP_home.htm

Director: Professor Paul Greenough, History, Phone: 335-2222

Certificate in Latin American Studies – An interdisciplinary certificate program that focuses on the history, politics, social organization, economy, geography, art and literature of Central and South America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and of Latinos in the United States.

http://www.uiowa.edu/~intl/ACAD/lasp/lasp_home.htm

Director: Professor Mercedes Nino-Murcia, Spanish and Portuguese, Phone: 335-0369

Interdisciplinary Masters Degree in International Studies – An interdisciplinary master's degree offered through the Graduate College that allows students to focus on a geographic or thematic area.

<http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/GradPrograms/InterdisProgApproval.htm>

Coordinator: Dale Wurster, Associate Dean Graduate College, Phone: 335-2137

Graduate Degree in Foreign Language Acquisition Research and Education – A doctoral program with specialization areas, including linguistics, program coordination/materials development, and technology. An individually designed specialization is also available.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~intl/ACAD/flare/flarehome.html>

Co-Directors: Associate Professor L. Kathy Heilenman, French and Italian, Phone: 335-2317
Associate Professor Judith Liskin-Gasparro, Spanish and Portuguese

Friends and Family

Many study abroad students have trouble reconnecting with their friends and family when they return from their time abroad. This often proves to be the greatest source of reverse-culture-shock stress. You have just come back from an amazing adventure abroad and are overflowing with stories to tell. You have been totally transformed and cannot wait to tell everyone about every beach you visited, every culinary delight you sampled, and every charismatic local you honed your language skills with over a beer or five. As amazing and life-changing your experiences were for you, you will inevitably find that some people will be less enthused to hear about every detail of your life abroad than you will be to tell them. Changes will have taken place in the lives of your loved ones as well, and sometimes it can be difficult to reconnect after so much has changed for everyone. On the other hand, you may find that you can communicate more effectively with some people and that being abroad has strengthened your relationships.

Here are some thoughts some recent UI returnees have had about changing relationships:

- Life went on while I was gone (but hasn't changed too much, luckily!).
- Distance did not make the heart grow fonder.
- I know who my close friends are and I don't take them for granted like I used to.
- I feel more detached from society in general and I like spending more time by myself.

- I have less interest in the things that we usually do here, but my boyfriend and I have actually gotten closer after the initial adjustment.
- I lost contact with my friends while abroad and re-establishing those relationships has been hard.
- I went through a big educational change, and now find that I have less in common with my friends.
- Friends just didn't understand what I had gone through abroad.

It is important to understand that studying abroad is a life-changing event, and the changes that take place as a result of your time abroad can affect you and your relationships for a long time after you return. Your connections to old friends may fade, while you may find stronger connections with people were not close to before you studied abroad. Understand that these relationships may be different and do your best to integrate the changes you experienced during your time abroad with your relationships to friends and family when you return home.

Integrating your foreign experience

Well, this is it. You're home. No more crazy exotic excitement around every corner, no kooky tourist subculture, no more food you don't know the name of. But! Fear not! It may be time to hang up the backpack and start trekking across the icy tundra of the University of Iowa campus to class once again, but it doesn't have to be the end of the study abroad fun! Studying abroad has given you a brand new perspective and a billion new experiences that you will carry with you for the rest of your life. There are many ways to keep your experiences abroad alive. It's time now to take advantage of the new, post-study-abroad you and see what you can do to keep yourself connected to the world beyond our borders.

Here are some ways returnees have kept themselves connected to the international community:

- I volunteer at the United Nations Association and am looking for an international job.
- I listen to my Spanish music a lot and I just ordered a book from Spain to catch up when I have free time. I still think in Spanish. Next year for spring break, if the flights are cheap, I'm dragging friends to Spain to travel a little bit!
- I've decided to work in India after graduation.
- I changed my major to Spanish, have more Hispanic friends, utilize the language when I can be of help to customers at work, and talk with my grandparents who speak Spanish.
- I write in French every now and then, and I talk about my experience a lot.
- I did a presentation for a women's group after I got back. I'm still in touch with about 5-6 people I met while studying abroad and one of them is coming to visit me later this year. I will often bring a different perspective to a conversation if asked, and lots of people are always asking me about studying abroad because it is something that they 'wished they would have done'.

Get involved in international activities here in Iowa City

- Get involved in **OASIS**, (Organization for the Active Support of International Students). Make a difference here at the UI! Contact Helen Jameson, Office of International Students & Scholars Activities Coordinator, 335-3584.
- Join the **International Classroom Journey** and give talks at local schools and community centers about your experience. Contact Buffy Quintero, International Programs Outreach Coordinator, 335-0345.
- If you're living in the residence halls, consider joining the **International Crossroads Community** in Hillcrest Hall. Contact the Housing Assignment Office, 335-3009.
- Most UI language departments sponsor a weekly conversation hour or a weekly meal where you can keep your newly-acquired language skills honed and polished. Contact the respective language departments for further information.
- Join one of several local community organizations that have an international focus, including the **Iowa City Foreign Relations Council** (ICFRC, 335-0351), the **Council**

for International Visitors to Iowa City (CIVIC, 335-0351), and **Amnesty International** (UI Student Government, 353-2243)

- Come to any of the educational and cultural activities sponsored by International Programs. See <http://www.uiowa.edu/~intl/> for a monthly calendar of events.
- Apply to be a peer adviser at the **Office for Study Abroad!** Positions are open to recently returned study abroad students and are typically available at the beginning of the fall semester. Information and applications are available at the Office for Study Abroad or on our website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~uiabroad/returning/RETURNINGpeer.html> .

Help new international students who come to the UI

- Volunteer to help during new international student orientation at the beginning of fall & spring semesters. Contact the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS), 335-0335.
- Join **Global Buddies**, a group that matches new international students with returned study abroad students. Contact Helen Jameson, OISS Programs Coordinator, 335-3584.
- Join the **Friends of International Students** community group, and get matched with an international student to do things together. Contact Helen Jameson, 335-3584.
- If you're female and want to welcome foreign women to the local community, join the **International Women's Club**. Pick up an application form from the OISS, or contact Kathy Fait, 643-7476 (h) or 335-4322 (w).

Final Tips

- *Talk to other world travelers.* They are often excited to hear about your stories and to share and compare experiences.
- *Stay in contact with friends you have made in your host country.*
- *Become an agent of change in your community.* You have gained a valuable new perspective that you can share with the people around you.
- *Keep up on international issues.* Newspapers and newsmagazines are useful media for staying informed. Both the main library and Prairie Lights have multiple foreign newspapers available. On cable TV, *Scola* broadcasts half-hour foreign news programs. You could also join a group, organization or listserv that is interested in your favorite part of the world or has concerns similar to yours about certain topics.
- *Stay up with the language you worked so hard on mastering.* Classes are good, and so are conversation partners, listening to tapes, reading books in that language, and joining a cultural club.
- *Look for job which allows you to utilize your cross-cultural skills.* Visit the Career Center for advice on how to use your international experience to help you get an international job <<http://www.careers.uiowa.edu/>>.
- *Apply for undergraduate or graduate scholarships for additional study or research abroad.* The resource room at the Office for Study Abroad has this information and is online at <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~uiabroad/financing/FINANCEmain.html>>
- *Last but not least we urge you to TRAVEL AGAIN!* Each time you venture out you learn more about the country, about the world, and about yourself. Your study abroad experience was not an isolated incident during your college years you will vaguely remember later on, but the stepping stone to future adventures. Keep your eyes open for cheap flights deals to far off places, look for international internships, volunteer opportunities or work abroad, and think about taking part in another study abroad program...you did it once, why not do it again?!

