PART 3: LIFE OVERSEAS

Staying connected, academic and social life
Communication

Program Directors

Most of you will have on-site Program Directors and we ask you to provide their contact information, as well as yours, on the Overseas Address Form. Their roles are very important and they should be your first line of contact. They will not only orient you to your study abroad location, but will be available for all kinds of assistance: academic, housing, everyday living, health and safety issues, and more. While you are on your program, your first point of contact for questions or concerns about housing, local culture, customs, commuting, coursework and the like should be addressed first to the program director. They are on location, and have the knowledge necessary to help you get what you need to make your studies successful.

Connecting from Abroad

Most students abroad will have phone and internet access. We are accustomed to relatively inexpensive phone calls, free University email accounts, and instant WiFi. In many overseas locations, these services may be more expensive than you are used to, or not as available. They may be considered a luxury, rather than a given. Email access provided by your program may be limited to certain hours. Local telephone calls from land lines may be more expensive than in the U.S. On the other hand, you will find that in many countries, the public telephone system is more sophisticated than that of the United States. Card systems simplify using public phones for local or long distance calling. Pre-paid calling cards are another method of international long distance; they can be purchased at stores and over the internet. Your program director will be able to help you choose from the many available options. Your program director will also advise on purchasing a cell phone while abroad (see section below).

If you are bringing a laptop with a webcam, you may want to use an Internet-based communication provider such as Skype, which will allow you to call your family and friends for free. Visit http://www.skype.com for more information. Find out before you go abroad if you will have regular access to services such as faxing or email. If not, plan accordingly. Above all, do not abuse any privileges given to you by your host family or by your program directors. WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app which allows you to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS.

Likewise, be aware that few American students (normally only those directly enrolled in an overseas university) have free and relatively unlimited access to email. Computer labs and internet cafés may not be open as late as they are here. Shopping around can save you a lot, because the high demand is lowering prices everywhere. You may also find that pre-buying hours is your best option. You’ll need to strike a balance; stay in touch, but don’t live vicariously back at UR.

Periodically during the semester, the Center for Education Abroad will communicate with you via email. You are responsible for maintaining and checking your UR email account on a regular basis. Check in with ITS to be sure your password will not need to be changed while you are away.
A. Keeping the Lines of Communication Open

One of the countless benefits of being a University of Rochester student is the ease and abundance of communication between students, families, faculty, and staff. This also holds true while you are studying abroad. You've already discovered that we begin our regular communications with you long before you depart. We have also mailed an information packet to your parents/guardians describing study abroad policies, costs and billing procedures, and information about health and safety.

B. Contacting UR

The Pre-departure Handbook also includes contact information for key UR offices. If you need to contact the College Center for Advising Services, for example, when you are abroad, you'll have that information at hand. Space is provided for you to write down the name and contact information of your UR advisers: academic, major, minor, and certificate. Even if you speak to these advisers and obtain their approval of your courses before you go abroad (as well you should), your course schedule may change. If, for example, you discover a new course once you arrive overseas, it will be essential to have your adviser's email address available to secure approval for that course.

Visit our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/URAbroad. You can submit photos and keep up to date on events sponsored by our office. Advisers in the Center for Education Abroad can also arrange to meet with you via Skype to answer any questions you may have.

We are always available during regular office hours by mail, email, fax, Skype, or telephone. Keep in mind when contacting anyone at UR that there is a time difference of anywhere from two to 16 hours. This means that you normally won't get an immediate response to your electronic communication. Please allow 24-48 hours; faculty and staff are just as busy as you are!

C. Mailings While You're Abroad

While you are abroad, you may be out of sight, but not out of mind. We will send you occasional group emails, if a situation necessitates. The Office of Residential Life and the Parking Office may also be in touch with you to help you plan for your return semester. When you return, we will send you a study abroad survey (through Survey Monkey) as part of a "Welcome Back" emailing.
D. Internet access

Most of you will be in places with relatively easy internet access, either at your program center, university computing center, residence, or internet cafes. Don't be surprised to find time limits and/or fees assessed for this service. Be considerate of any regulations. After you've gotten over any initial homesickness, spend less time online and more time exploring your new surroundings and community.

F. Phone Service and Email

NOTE: Remember to take into account the difference in time zones when making international calls. Here’s a good web site: http://www.what-time-is-it.com/

You will probably acquire a cell phone for your stay overseas; some programs require students to have one while on the program. Most programs will help students to acquire cell phones, either by selling recycled phones or directing them to purchase one. If you already own a cell phone or smart phone, check with your service provider, as most American phones do not work outside the United States or are prohibitively expensive to use. As you would here, be sure you've read (or get help to read) the fine print on the contract. Failure to do so can result in staggering costs. Be sure to get in writing how much services will cost for voice mail, receiving international calls, and text messaging. NOTE: Students in some locations have neglected to notice “fine print” regarding texting. In many cases, if you go over the limit, there can be extremely high charges for each text message.

Contact your cell phone provider to activate international calling, rent an international cell phone or purchase an unlocked phone and SIM card for use in another country. Note: some mobile phones are not compatible for use on networks outside the United States. In addition, some providers may charge a fee for an international calling plan or phone rental.

Phone cards are also a low-cost alternative. If you have questions about telephones, direct them to your program provider or to study abroad returnees. For more information on telephoning to/from overseas locations, including international calling codes, try the AT&T website.

Likewise, be aware that few American students (normally only those directly enrolled in an overseas university) have free and relatively unlimited access to email. Computer labs and internet cafes may not open as late as they are in the US. You'll need to strike a balance; stay in touch, but don't live vicariously back at UR. Periodically, during the semester, the Center for Education Abroad will communicate with you via email.

The Center for Education Abroad will use your UR Gmail account to send you official correspondence. Therefore, you are responsible for maintaining and checking your UR mail account. The Center for Education Abroad will not send emails to alternate
email accounts. See below for information about how to access your email account from abroad. Keep in touch!

**Important Information from University IT**

What you should do before you leave for your trip abroad:

1. Review or setup your netid password reset information in case you forget your password. To do this, go to [https://myidentity.rochester.edu](https://myidentity.rochester.edu) and login with your netid and netid password. Select the “Change Forgotten Password Information” link to review/complete your recovery questions and answers.

Note: Be mindful of answers to your security questions. Answers are case-sensitive and space sensitive (i.e. the number of spaces between words matter). If you need to use the password recovery process, you MUST enter the answers to your security questions exactly the same way you did above.

There are two ways to check your UR Gmail account while you are abroad:

1. Login to UR Gmail ([http://tech.rochester.edu/services/gmail/](http://tech.rochester.edu/services/gmail/)) with your netid and netid password.
2. Forward your UR Gmail account to another account.

To set up forwarding, login to your UR Gmail: [http://tech.rochester.edu/services/gmail/](http://tech.rochester.edu/services/gmail/)

In the upper right hand corner click the “Settings” link. You will see a tab called “Forwarding and POP/IMAP”. The first section of this tab provides forwarding options.

**Password Reset**

If you plan on accessing your email account while you are studying abroad, do not forget your netID and netid password! If you forget your netid password, University IT WILL NOT reset your password over the phone. If you have forgotten your netid password AND you have already set up your security questions, follow these steps:

1. To reset your password using your security questions please go to [http://myidentity.rochester.edu](http://myidentity.rochester.edu). Enter your netid. Then click on “Forgot NetID Password” and enter the answers to your security questions.

If you are unable to reset your password, you must complete a “Long Distance Password Reset Request” and send University IT proper identification by mail or fax to get your password reset. The link to the form is called “NetID Password Reset (Notary Signature)” located here, [http://www.rochester.edu/it/forms/#netidpwresetoffsie](http://www.rochester.edu/it/forms/#netidpwresetoffsie) under the heading “NetID Password Reset (offsite/remote location) (ITSF-060).
The vacation responder option in UR Gmail

The vacation responder option allows you to notify people that you are studying abroad. It will automatically reply to any email message you receive directly by notifying the sender that you are not reading your email. The vacation responder option will still save all of the email you receive in your account so that you can read it when you return. To set the “vacation responder” option on your UR Gmail account following these steps:

1. Login to your UR Gmail account with your netid and netid password here: [http://tech.rochester.edu/services/gmail/](http://tech.rochester.edu/services/gmail/)
2. On the General tab there is an option called “Vacation Responder”. Set the option to “on” and complete the subject/message criteria. To find out more about this option select the “Learn More” link located in the option box.

Note: When you return from study abroad experience, you will need to turn off the vacation responder to disable the vacation message.

If you do not plan to check your email while abroad do the following:

- Unsubscribe from any mailing lists that you may belong to that your inbox does not fill up while you are away.
- **DO NOT SHARE YOUR NETID PASSWORD!** Do not allow someone else to check your UR Gmail account while you are abroad.
- Se the “vacation responder” option before you leave to send automatic replies to received email. See above for more details.

Practice Email Awareness

- **DO NOT SHARE IMPORTANT PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION THROUGH EMAIL** (i.e. netid password and social security number. Email is an insecure medium for transferring this information. University IT will NEVER ask you for your password or social security number).
- Review University IT policies: [http://www.rochester.edu/it/policy](http://www.rochester.edu/it/policy) and procedures BEFORE going abroad so you can make sure you understand how to get help if needed.

If you have questions or problems while you are away, contact University IT:
By email: UnivITHelp@rochester.edu
By Phone: 585-275-2000
Student Life & Housing Abroad

Daily Life, or What to Expect

“Campus life” is generally an American concept, although you may find similar milieux at many of our partner universities. But normally, academic buildings are in the heart of a city, and may be scattered over a considerable area, separated from each other by residences, restaurants, and shops. You may live in one part of the city, attend classes in another part, work in the library somewhere else, and eat your meals in a student restaurant. You will participate in everyday city life: mass transportation, pollution, strikes, impersonal attitudes, different gender issues, etc. Generally, expect less planned or “pre-packaged” student life, fewer student clubs, fewer social affairs, and fewer organized sports than in the United States. An exception would be campus-based universities, and those in smaller cities, so this might affect your choice of where to study. On the other hand, study in a larger city will offer greater varieties of independent cultural and social activities.

Most study abroad programs do not have a full array of student service offices, but all have a program or site administrator. This person variously serves the roles of academic adviser, residence hall director, counselor, and tour guide, and will be an invaluable resource throughout the course of your program. Get to know your program director and the local staff. They are your first contact for anything from a routine question to an emergency.

Meeting People

In many societies, particularly in western Europe, it not as easy to make friends as in the United States. For example, the concept of a "friend" is quite distinct from the concept of an "acquaintance." It takes months to make a "friend," but once a friendship is formed, it will last a lifetime.

If you are living with a family, your relationship will typically start off as that between boarder and landlord/landlady. It will be up to both of you to create something more than the initial, formal relationship. It may take time to adjust to the customs and habits of the family and to develop a warm relationship. Be patient: it does happen, but it takes time and flexibility.

Housing and Meals

Most overseas universities in large cities do not have residence halls available for visiting students. Where they are available, they tend to have fewer amenities than those at the University of Rochester. You may live in a room in an apartment, a furnished room in a pension, a student hostel, or a room with a “family.” Some programs offer a choice of housing options; others do not. Many programs offer housing or provide assistance in finding housing. Participants in some programs, such as the University of Cologne
Exchange, are responsible for finding their own housing. If this is the case, you should begin your search for housing options as soon as you have been admitted to your program. **Students participating in University of Rochester programs are required to live in program housing (standard double-occupancy rooms).**

Note that your housing may not be on a university campus and that you may have to walk or take public transportation to get your classrooms or program center. Commuting times can be as long as an hour each way. Due to unforeseen circumstances, such as change in program size, renovation of housing, or other reasons, housing options may be different than what was listed in your program guide or at the program website. Students participating in UR-sponsored programs are required to live in program housing. **Prepare to be flexible.**

Few study abroad programs offer meal plans such as those that are available on campus at UR. Your university or program may have a dining hall (as is often the case in Australian residential colleges, for instance) or--more commonly--a variety of on-campus eateries. However, in many cases, you’ll have a greater degree of independence and flexibility in planning your meals. You may be able to choose from a number of local restaurants. This can be a great way to try out the local cuisine but it can also be a very expensive way to feed yourself, depending on the cost of living and the caliber of the restaurant.

Pay attention to the sanitary conditions wherever you eat. For example, the food stalls at the local market in a developing nation might be very cost-effective and culturally authentic, but they might also serve up a sure recipe for traveler’s diarrhea. In many cases, your best bet will be to prepare your own meals. This is usually the most affordable option and a good way to stay within your budget.

If you’re living in a homestay, your host family will typically provide at least one meal per day. This is a wonderful way to sample some home cooking typical of your host country. Sometimes it can also present awkward dilemmas which require you to balance sensitivity against dietary requirements. It’s important to be clear up front about any special diet, particularly if you are vegetarian or vegan. Also, your program staff will usually provide the host families with guidelines for food preparation, since foods that seem ordinary to them might present gastronomical challenges for someone newly arrived in the country.

It may sound intimidating if you’re accustomed to relying on a campus meal plan, but most students find cooking and food shopping a fun aspect of overseas living. Your program staff can give you advice about the best places to buy groceries (don’t expect to find a Wegmans nearby), and your housing will often include kitchen facilities. Particularly if you’re staying with other students, it makes sense to share meals and to take turns cooking. Preparing your own meals allows you to regulate the sanitary conditions of your food preparation. For example, you can avoid raw vegetables if you’re not confident about the quality of the water used to wash them. And while you might be
able to find boil-and-serve comfort foods such as macaroni and cheese, you should experiment with local delicacies, too.

Meals Abroad

Few study abroad programs offer meal plans such as those that are available on campus at UR. Your university or program may have a dining hall (as is often the case in Australian residential colleges, for instance) or—more commonly—a variety of on-campus eateries. However, in many cases, you’ll have a greater degree of independence and flexibility in planning your meals. You may be able to choose from a number of local restaurants. This can be a great way to try out the local cuisine, but it can also be a very expensive way to feed yourself, depending on the cost of living and the caliber of the restaurant. Also, pay attention to the sanitary conditions wherever you eat. For example, the food stalls at the local farmer’s market might be very cost-effective and culturally authentic, but they might also serve up a sure recipe for traveler’s diarrhea (see the section on “Health Care While Studying Abroad” for more on this topic).

In many cases, your best bet will be to prepare your own meals. This is usually the most affordable option, and a good way to stay within your budget. It may sound intimidating if you’re accustomed to relying on an Unlimited Plan here on campus, but most students find cooking and food shopping an exciting aspect of overseas living. Your program staff can give you advice about the best places to buy groceries (don’t expect to find a Wegman’s nearby), and your housing will often include kitchen facilities. Particularly if you’re staying with other students, it makes sense to share meals and take turns cooking. Preparing your own meals allows you to regulate the sanitary conditions of your food preparation. So, for example, you can avoid raw vegetables if you’re not confident about the quality of the water used to wash them. And while you might be able to find boil-and-serve comfort foods such as macaroni and cheese, you can experiment with local delicacies, too.

Last but not least, if you’re living in a homestay, your host family will typically provide at least one meal per day. This, of course, is a wonderful way to sample some home cooking typical of your host country. Sometimes it can also present awkward dilemmas which require you to balance sensitivity against dietary requirements. It’s important to be clear up front about any special dietary limitations you may have. That way, if you’re a vegetarian, your host mother will know not to put chicken feet in your soup. Also, your program staff will usually provide the host families with guidelines for food preparation, since foods that seem ordinary to them might present gastronomical challenges for someone newly arrived in the country.

Housing Overseas

Study abroad programs typically offer several housing options. You might live in a dorm with students from the host country or you might live in a homestay, with a family. Alternately, you may live in an apartment with other students who are studying
there. Finally, some programs arrange for you to spend part of the semester in one type of housing and the rest of the semester in another type.

Whatever the housing arrangements on your program, remember that housing standards in other countries may be different than what you're used to here. Specifically, rooms may tend to be smaller, buildings may be older, windows might be more drafty, or plumbing more fragile. So it's especially important to be flexible with your expectations. Also, be aware that published housing arrangements may change prior to your arrival on the program.

A. Residence Halls

Dormitory life abroad will be quite familiar to UR students, given the residential structure of The College. Programs that offer residence halls will often afford you the opportunity to live near or with students from your host country or other international students. This is a great opportunity to get to know them. Cable TV and speedy internet connections are not common overseas, so don't be surprised to find fewer such luxuries. Just as in the UR dorms, remember that there are rules that you must follow when living in close proximity to others (e.g. quiet hours). When you break the rules in the UR dorms, you're a lousy roommate or hallmate and are subject to disciplinary action.

When you break the rules abroad, in addition to being a lousy roommate/hallmate, you're an "Ugly American," and you're still subject to UR disciplinary action, including being removed from the program and sent home.

B. Homestays

Homestays are a great way to get an intimate view of life in your host country, including practicing the language. Homestays are more common (and arguably more effective) in some countries than in others. Spain and Italy, for example, have a social structure that makes homestays quite feasible. Even there, homestays sometimes are more like a boarding arrangement, and you may see your host family regularly, but may not have extensive contact with them other than passing greetings. Students often fear that homestays will be too limiting, in terms of not being able to come and go as they please.

It is true that homestays require a high degree of cultural sensitivity—indeed, that's precisely why they are an effective way to learn about your host country. This will require you to be respectful of when your host family eats meals and goes to bed. Moreover, you'll need to be sensitive to issues of food tastes, use of utilities and water, standards of timeliness, and financial issues. For example, if your host family is traveling to visit a historic site, be sure that it won't inconvenience them before inviting yourself along.
C. Apartments

Apartments afford you a great deal of freedom while you're abroad, but they can also serve to isolate you from the people and the culture of your host country, especially if you're sharing an apartment with other U.S. students. Some programs arrange an apartment for you, which will be ready upon your arrival. Other programs require you to find your own apartment once you arrive in the country: this is a challenging exercise in finding your way in your new environs.

You may find that preparing your own meals in your apartment is a good way to budget your money (it costs less than eating out all the time). At the same time, you should challenge yourself to get out and meet the people of your host country, and to see the sites.

In any case, you should be prepared to pay a security deposit upon move-in. If you damage the apartment (or residence hall, or homestay) at all during your stay, be prepared to pay for those damages with your security deposit (and with additional payments, if necessary). If you leave your place of residence undamaged, your deposit will be refunded to you. Realize that in many countries (especially in Europe), apartment buildings may be many decades old, and plumbing may be even older. Take special care, as these facilities may be easily damaged. For example, replacement of lost keys can be costly.

D. Hotels, Hostels and Other Lodging

Most students spend part of the semester abroad staying in hotels and other lodging during travels. Many programs will house you temporarily in a hotel upon your arrival. Notice that the hotel industry may be far less developed and less regulated in your host country than it is in the U.S. The disadvantage is that you may find yourself in substandard accommodations if you're not careful (no elevators, less than pristine sanitary conditions, and thin walls are a few common pitfalls). The good news is that you may find lodging far more affordable than it is here in the U.S. For example, while you may not be able to find a room here for less than $35, you might be able to rent a decent room abroad for $20, or even less in some countries. Youth hostels are a great example of affordable housing for college students, and a good way to meet other travelers. Consider getting a Hostelling International Card before you go abroad. Of course, for the weak of heart, the sore of feet, or the well-to-do, you'll find Sheratons, Marriotts and better five-star hotels in most cities around the world.

While your housing abroad may sometimes serve as a refreshing retreat from your new surroundings, remember that it is not an oasis of American life. You're still a guest in the country, even when you're in your own living space. Be respectful of your neighbors and of your landlord or host family.
IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM RESIDENTIAL LIFE

Students Currently Living in University Housing

Housing Contracts

Your housing contract and room assignment will be cancelled and room charges deleted when Residential Life receives official notification that you are officially going on a study abroad program. Once this occurs, that room is no longer available even if you change your mind at a later date about going abroad.

It is ok to submit a housing contract for the room draw if you were not sure whether you will be accepted to a study abroad program or if you are unsure about whether you are going. However, please realize that if you decide to go abroad, this can affect your friends in suites and apartments. We will not be able to keep your room vacant for fall semester due to very heavy demands for housing during the fall semester. Please advise your suitemates that a person will be assigned to the vacancy – this may affect their strategy for the upcoming room draw.

No Storage Available

Residential Life does not have any available storage. If you need information about local storage facilities, check your Area Office or come to the Office for Residential Life, 020 Gates for details. Storage options might be available through 4.0 Storage listed on Student Government Association website.

Housing When You Return:

For students abroad for spring semester:

The Office for Residential Life will be emailing Room Drawing information to you in late February/early March 2016. Please be sure the Study Abroad Office has your email address as soon as possible - we rely upon them their information. Students will have to carefully read the instructions in order to participate in the online housing selection process. It is possible to be included in a suite of your best friends or in a special interest housing group (greek or non-greek). Details on how to do this will be included on our website.

If students have specific questions, they can be addressed by contacting the Office for Residential Life at 585.275.3166 or email housing@reslife.rochester.edu.
INFORMATION FROM UNIVERSITY DINING SERVICES: DINING PLAN INFORMATION

Students abroad are not required to purchase a UR meal plan during their time abroad. **You will need to purchase a meal plan when you return from your time abroad.** For a full description of the University’s selection of dining plans, please refer to the Dining Options publication, visit the University Dining Services Web site at http://www.rochester.edu/dining/, visit the Customer Service/ID Office, or call the office at (585) 275-3975 or (800) 661-1118 or email at mealplans@services.rochester.edu.

DINING PLAN CHANGES AND CANCELLATIONS

Important Note: Students studying abroad for the spring semester do not need to cancel their dining plan for the fall semester. Dining services will refund any fall dining charges to the bursar bill once official notification is received that you are on Study Abroad Status.

Fall and spring dining plan changes and cancellations are permitted only during the designated change periods.

A $25 fee is charged for any plan-level decrease or cancellation that is requested during any modification period except the November open modification period. Parents or legal guardians cannot make dining plan changes/cancellations for the participant. Changes or cancellations must be submitted via the Dining Plan Change/Cancellation form. Phone or oral requests are not accepted. Changes or cancellations must be made at the Customer Service/ID Office in Susan B. Anthony Halls.

Please visit the Dining Services website for information on Open Modification periods.

REFUND POLICY

Meal and Declining Plans

Unused fall semester declining balance dollars carry forward to the spring semester. Remaining declining balance dollars at the close of the spring semester are nonrefundable.

Refunds of unused declining balance and flex funds will be issued for any participant who withdraws from the University or whose status changes to inactive during a semester, as certified by College Center for Advising Services, the Registrar’s Office, or the appropriate dean. Refunds will be credited through the University’s Bursar account. Meal Plan costs are also credited through the University’s Bursar statement and are subject to proration based upon the official date of cancellation.
URos Accounts

URos Account balances will carry over from year to year, or until your permanent departure from the University of Rochester. Should you withdraw or resign from the University at the close of a semester or upon graduation, any unused balance of $20 or more will be refunded to you.

DINING PLAN EXEMPTIONS

Participants requesting exemption from dining plan requirements must request and submit a Dining Plan Exemption and Change Appeal Form to the Customer Service/ID Office in Susan B. Anthony Halls. The request will then be forwarded to the University Dining Advisory Committee. Requests for exemption for religious reasons will be reviewed with appropriate University authorities. They will make recommendations to the committee.

Exemptions for special dietary needs or medical reasons must be submitted in letter format from the participant’s medical doctor on the physician’s letterhead. This request should be mailed to: University Health Services, 250 Crittenden Boulevard, C/O Dr. Ralph Manchester, P.O. Box 617, Rochester, NY 14642.

For all such requests, we ask that the student provide a description of the special diet that needs to be followed due to his/her medical condition. The request will be reviewed, and recommendations will be made to the University Dining Advisory Committee. Decisions of the University Dining Advisory Committee are final. Only one exemption per participant will be considered in a semester.

Parking Information

The Parking Office holds a lottery for Resident Student parking permits in the spring before students leave for summer break. Students studying abroad during the fall semester will participate in this lottery. For those students who will be abroad during the spring semester, the registration form for the lottery will be emailed to you while you are abroad. This will enable you to join your classmates for the space allocation for the 2015-‘16 academic year. This space allocation is done by seniority. Permit prices are included and payment must be made by the specified date to hold the space for the following school year. If for some reason you do not receive the emailing and need parking for the following year you may contact the parking office at (585) 275-3983 or mail 109 Fauver Stadium, University of Rochester NY 14627 or email rcpark@facilities.rochester.edu.