

Medical and Health Issues

Medical Insurance:

- Your insurance may not be accepted by providers outside your home country. Check with your health insurance provider to confirm whether you are covered or not. If you are: Print out a claim form and make sure you carry your policy identity card with you abroad. If you are not: Please acquire temporary coverage through a group like [GeoBlue](#).

Immunizations and Health Issues:

- Travel to some destinations may require immunizations or other measures. You should consult the Center for Disease Control and the [UVM International Travel Clinic](#) or another health care professional to talk about the requirements and recommendations for the country to which you are traveling well before your departure. The Travel Clinic recommends you make an initial appointment at least six weeks prior to departure.
- If you see a therapist or counselor, discuss any mental health issues you have that may affect your experience abroad.

Prescription Drugs:

- If you are taking any prescription drugs, PLEASE research whether your medications are legal in your host country, what quantities you can carry with you in your host country, and how you will transport your medications abroad. Your doctor or counselor may be able to assist you. You should check with the foreign embassy of the country you are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics.
- Carry your medications in their original, clearly labeled containers along with a copy of the original prescription.
- You will need a physician's prescription (in generic form) for medication and medical supplies to pass through customs in your host country.
- If you have a history of significant medical problems, consider wearing a medical alert bracelet while abroad.
- Bring photocopies of necessary prescriptions (eyeglasses, medications, etc.).

First-Aid Kit:

- Soap-less, anti-bacterial hand wash: Good hand hygiene is essential to good health on the road and helps in avoiding problems from diarrhea to a cold.
- Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control about a First-Aid kit: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/pack-smart#travelhealthkit>

Country-specific Information on Safety:

- The State Department International Travel website lists Consular Information Sheets and Travel Advisories by country: <http://travel.state.gov/>
- Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Traveler's Health website: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>
- The Association for Safe International Road Travel promotes road safety through education and advocacy. It compiles yearly updated road travel reports on over 150 countries (there may be a fee for obtaining the reports): <http://www.asirt.org/>

Safety Abroad

- Read and evaluate all materials provided by your faculty director that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in your host country.
- Know where to get help if needed. Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood, locate your nearest police station and hospital, and be sure you have all necessary emergency phone numbers on your person at all times.
- In the case of an emergency affecting the public, please follow any emergency procedures put in place by your faculty director.
- Stay informed about local and regional news, read newspapers with good international coverage and analysis of local issues.

- Be aware and alert to what's going on around you at all times. Avoid crowds, protest groups and volatile situations. In the event of a disturbance, do not get involved. In some cases it is illegal for foreigners to get involved in political protests.
- Keep a low profile. Dress appropriately for the occasion and cultural context, and do not dress in ways that mark you as a foreigner. Don't divulge personal information to strangers or agree to meet someone in a secluded area.
- Know which areas are considered safe/unsafe in the cities you visit and act accordingly.
- Do not display money, jewelry, cameras, or other valuable items. You might want to consider insuring valuable items such as camera, laptop, jewelry that you are bringing abroad. Never carry large amounts of cash.
- If you are out at night, stay in well-lit areas and don't use short cuts or narrow alleys.
- Stay in groups of at least two. Never leave a friend alone at a bar or nightclub while out.
- Be cautious and use common sense while patronizing restaurants, nightclubs, cafes, bars, or places where large crowds may gather (stadiums, malls, festivals)
- Alcohol and drugs decrease your ability to consent and to make good judgment. They also make you an easier target for all types of crime. Be wary of impairing your judgment through excessive use of alcohol, and do not use drugs while abroad.
- Laws regarding alcohol and drugs vary between countries, and many countries have stricter policies than the US. Students have been jailed abroad in the past for drug and alcohol-related offenses.
- Learn about taxis and public transportation, and know what your safest travel options are. Even taxis and public transportation that are considered safe by the local community may have risks. It is especially important to travel with a buddy while taking a taxi or overnight transportation.
- Make sure your faculty director knows how to contact you in case of emergency.
- To ensure your safety we encourage you to identify one or two "buddies" who will either always be with you, or know your whereabouts.
- What you consider harassment may not be considered so in another culture. For instance, staring and "catcalling" is extremely common in some countries. Usually the best way to deal with this behavior is by ignoring it and getting to a safe place as necessary. Dealing with this type of harassment can be very frustrating or tiring, and can take an emotional toll. Ask for help from your program staff or host university staff if you have concerns about harassment or need support. It is also a good idea to watch locals and see how they deal with street harassment.
- Just like at UVM, sexual misconduct and assault abroad are more likely to occur with someone you know than by a stranger. What is different from UVM while you are studying abroad is that culturally, the definition of sexual 'consent' varies from country to country. For example, at UVM if your sexual partner is incapacitated due to consumption of alcohol, it is impossible to get consent from him or her. Failure to get that consent constitutes sexual misconduct or assault. That is not the case in many study abroad destinations (including "Western" destinations); sex may be considered consensual unless you yell or unless you push back, and whether anyone has consumed alcohol may be irrelevant. Sexual assault is never the fault of the person who is assaulted. It is important that all of us understand that that may not be how it is seen where you are going. If you are raped or assaulted, it is never your fault. Get to a safe place; seek medical attention and emotional support.
- Toll-free sexual assault crisis lines are available for Americans abroad. For more details, please visit: <https://pathwaystosafety.org/get-help-now/> Live online chat with a crisis line is also available from Pathways to Safety if that is preferable to calling their toll-free international numbers.
- Laws in your host country may be very different than US laws. Your rights under the US Constitution do not apply to you when you are in a different country. Many countries have stricter constraints on speech, religious practice, protests, and other rights you have in the US. Many countries may also have laws regarding gender, race, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity that you may feel are discriminatory.
- While you may be uncomfortable or strongly disagree with some laws in your host country, you are individually responsible for following all local laws. If you do not, you could be subject to arrest.
- When US citizens are arrested abroad, the US embassy or consulate can help them by providing a list of local attorneys and an overview of the local justice system, and by visiting the US citizen in prison and advocating for their proper medical care. However, the US embassy or consulate cannot provide legal advice, pay for legal or medical services, or get a US citizen out of jail. For more information visit the [US State Department's page on their services to Americans arrested abroad](#).

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY:

- Follow the direction of your faculty leader or in-country contact. Office of International Education staff are available 24 hours/day 7 days/week via UVM Police Services at +1-802-656-3473. UVM's emergency services provider abroad, International SOS, is available by calling +1-215-942-8226.

- The Office of International Education (OIE) registers travel-study course enrolled students who are U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents with [STEP](#), the US State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, so that the State Department can contact you in case of an emergency and provide you with information and relevant services. If you are not in a travel-study course, please consult OIE to determine if your group will or will not be registered with the Department of State. If you are not a US citizen or Permanent Resident, research your native country's services to their citizens in an emergency abroad. They may have a similar registry program.

International SOS

UVM has contracted with a company called International SOS to provide worldwide assistance and evacuation services for all registered UVM students. International SOS offers our students travel, medical and security advice and services, as well as on-line access to information which many insurance companies do not offer. **International SOS is NOT health insurance.** UVM requires all students to maintain health insurance coverage and to make certain that their policies cover them while abroad.

OIE recommends that you visit the International SOS website to register emergency contact information and any medical history or information that a health care professional would need to know in order to treat you in case of an emergency.

Please visit their website: <https://www.internationalsos.com/>

Or download their app: <https://www.internationalsos.com/assistance-app>

UVM Membership Number: **11BSGC000020**

Using the International SOS Program

Medical, Security and Travel Services

In order to utilize any of the medical, security or travel services listed under Program Benefits, contact an SOS Assistance Center from anywhere in the world by calling directly, calling collect, or by calling the toll-free number. While we have designated the Philadelphia center in the United States as our primary contact, any of the SOS Assistance Centers will assist you.

- To ensure a prompt response when calling, you should be prepared to provide the following:
 - ✓ Your name, location, age, sex, and nationality
 - ✓ The program with which you are associated: i.e., **Study Abroad Program in _____.**
 - ✓ Your International SOS membership number: **11BSGC000020**
 - ✓ The telephone number from which you are calling (in case you are disconnected)
 - ✓ Your relationship to the member (if the person calling is not you.)
 - ✓ Name, location, and telephone number of the hospital or clinic (when applicable)
 - ✓ Name, location, and telephone number for the treating doctor, and where the doctor can be reached (when applicable)

Program Benefits

The following benefits come with enrollment in International SOS. Please keep in mind that some services may require an additional fee.

Medical Services

- Emergency evacuation
- Medically-supervised repatriation
- Companion ticket

- Additional travel and accommodation arrangements after medical evacuation
- Repatriation of mortal remains
- Return home of minor children
- Medical monitoring
- Inpatient admission and identification of receiving physician
- Emergency and routine medical advice
- Pre-trip information on travel health issues
- Medical and dental referrals
- Outpatient referrals
- Outpatient case management
- Claims assistance
- Outpatient medical expense guarantee and payment
- Inpatient medical expense guarantee, cost review and payment
- Dispatch of medication and medical supplies

Security Services

- Urgent and non-urgent travel security assistance and advice by telephone
- Daily online and email updates on the latest travel security developments
- Special Advisory emails with advice in response to significant travel security incidents
- Security and travel information on 220 countries and more than 330 cities
- Access to security evacuation
- Coordination of post-evacuation debriefs and counseling

Travel Services

- Legal referrals
- Emergency message transmission
- Translations and interpreters
- Lost document advice
- Ground transportation and accommodations for accompanying family members
- Emergency personal cash advances

Q: What is the role of International SOS?

A: International SOS provides you with worldwide quality health care and emergency assistance services 24 hours a day designed to supplement and integrate with UVM's services, procedures and policies. If applicable, you should always attempt to contact your program's on-site emergency contacts first, who will assist you. If they are not available, then proceed to contact International SOS.

Q: How can International SOS help?

A: International SOS provides you and your family with assurance that you will be assisted during emergency situations that may arise during travel. One phone call connects you to the International SOS network of multilingual specialists for immediate help. International SOS services are designed to help you with medical, personal, travel, security, and legal problems when away from home. Call International SOS at any time to speak with a physician or security specialist about simple or critical matters.

Q: How does it work?

A: Carry the International SOS membership card with you at all times. It includes the telephone numbers of the three major worldwide International SOS Assistance Centers. In the event of an emergency, call one of the emergency phone numbers listed on the card. If you do not have a card, you can [print one now](#).

Q: What if I have pre-trip questions about my travel destination or questions about the current status in that location?
A: In addition to calling the SOS Assistance Center for any pre-trip questions you may have, you can access Country and Security Guides from this website: <http://www.internationalsos.com> Use your membership number, **11BSGC000020**, as your member login. In addition to the information covered at the pre-departure sessions and on-site by your program, the SOS comprehensive guides provide both medical, security and general travel advice, such as information on the standard of health care, how to pay for medical care, the availability of medications, safety of the blood supply, embassy/visa information, dialing code information, cultural etiquette and financial and voltage/plug information.

Q: Do I need to activate my membership?
A: No, your membership is already active. Simply carry the card at all times while traveling. Whenever you need service, contact one of the emergency phone numbers listed on the back of the card. You do not need to report specific trip dates to International SOS each time you travel.

Q: What are Email Alerts?
A: You can choose to sign up for medical and/or security alerts by logging on and signing up using the “Email Alerts” button on the right side. Medical alerts are issued when there is an unusual health risk that, in the opinion of the SOS Medical staff, may negatively impact travelers or expatriates visiting a country. Security alerts are issued when SOS Security professionals have identified a security risk in a specific country.

Q: What if I need a doctor?
A: You should first activate the on-site emergency support network for your location. If you are traveling, or in a situation where you cannot contact the study abroad program staff, you should contact SOS. The International SOS Alarm Centers are listed on the back of your card. Call the International SOS Alarm Center that is nearest to you for a referral to a doctor who speaks your language.

Q: What if I need a lawyer while overseas?
A: Call the nearest International SOS Alarm Center for legal referrals. If you are in a situation where you require legal assistance, your faculty director should be informed of this immediately.

Q: What if I need prescription medication?
A: If you require a prescription that a local physician cannot obtain, or you need to replace lost, stolen or depleted medication, International SOS will, when permissible by local law, send the needed medication to you.

Q: What if I am hospitalized?
A: If you are in a situation or location where you cannot reach the faculty director call the nearest International SOS Assistance Center. International SOS will immediately take steps to evaluate the care you are receiving and determine what actions must be taken to ensure your safe and speedy recovery. International SOS will notify UVM immediately if you have not already done so.

Q: What if local medical facilities are not adequate for my specific requirements?
A: If you are hospitalized in an area where adequate medical facilities are not available, International SOS will obtain approval from UVM to evacuate you to a medical facility capable of providing the required care. A physician supervises evacuations, and when necessary, a medical specialist or nurse will accompany you during the evacuation. An air ambulance will be used when required.

Q: What happens when I am released from the hospital and still need help?

A: When your condition is stabilized and International SOS has determined that it is medically advisable to bring you home or to a facility near your permanent residence, International SOS will again obtain approval from UVM and arrange the repatriation under medical supervision.

Q: Will International SOS pay my medical bills?

A: No; your health insurance needs to do so. International SOS will guarantee and pay all up-front costs associated with your medical care so that your care is not delayed. Thereafter, you will need to reimburse International SOS through your health insurance company. You are responsible for the costs of medical care. This is why we require you to have health insurance coverage that will cover you while abroad. In situations where medical care is critical, by activating SOS you authorize medical care as necessary, and acknowledge that you will be billed for such care.

Q: How can International SOS assist in the event of death?

A: International SOS will render all assistance possible to UVM to obtain clearances and arrange transportation for the return of mortal remains. In such an event, UVM will be the point of contact for the family in this situation.