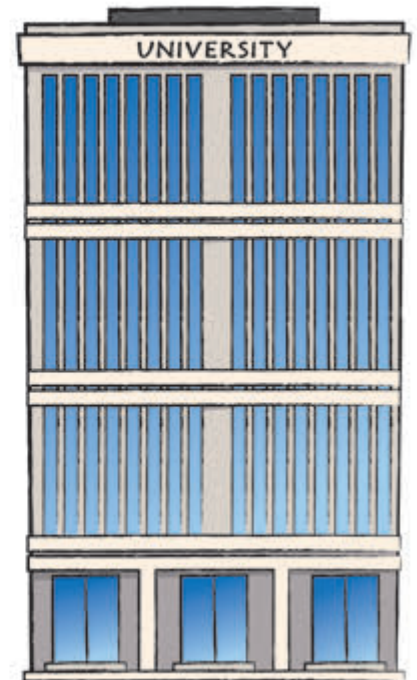
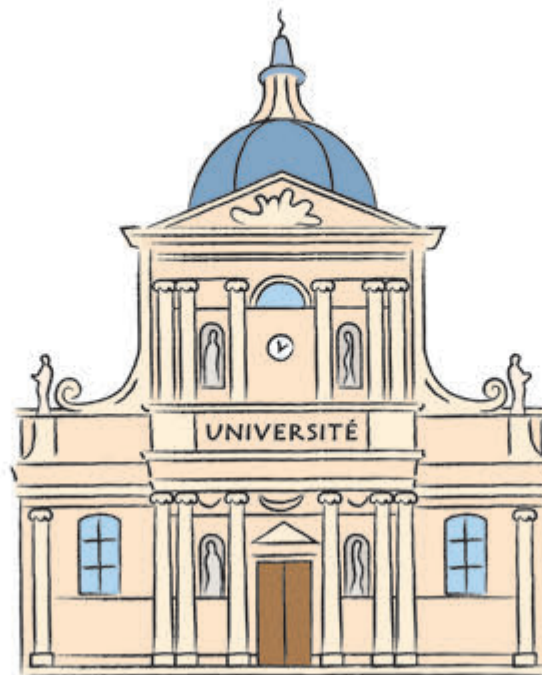
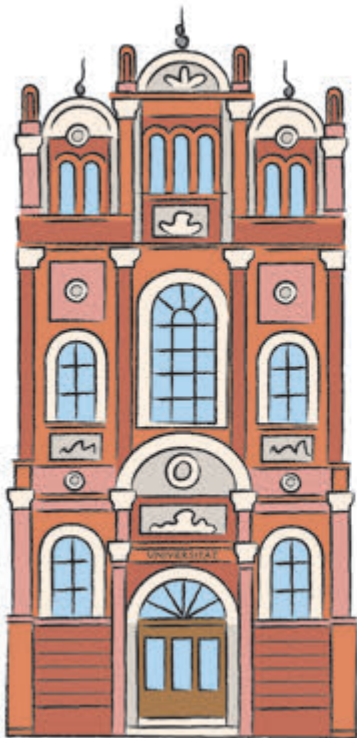


**International mobility – opportunity and problem**  
**Proper preparation for studying at a foreign university**

# Manual for the student

What should I know before  
I go to study abroad?



## Manual for the student

### What should I know before I go to study abroad?

This publication was created for international students to improve their reception in a foreign environment. It provides important information on how to prepare for their journey abroad.

The development of this manual was preceded by extensive qualitative (in-depth interviews with academic and non-academic staff members of universities) and quantitative (online questionnaire) primary research, conducted at universities in Poland, Hungary, Greece and Ukraine, as well as secondary research, mainly in the form of a review of good solutions from different European universities.

Based on the results of this research, we strived to create a simple manual with universal character that can be used by international students. We selected substantive information and supported it with a graphic message, thanks to which the described situations became more expressive.

*We hope that you find the information included in this manual both interesting and useful.*

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What should I know before I go to study abroad?

Be prepared that you are going abroad not only to study, but also to discover a new culture and country! This little booklet will help you get prepared before your arrival, so you will be able to spend more time on other things that matter to you soon after your arrival in the foreign country. This guide does not help you choose a university; rather, it provides you with important information on how to prepare for your journey once you have decided where you want to study. Studying abroad opens up many new possibilities e.g. the opportunity to get to know another country, live in a different academic environment, acquire a new way of thinking, find out about a different system of values, and learn to communicate and behave in a different way.

After arriving in a given country, foreign students find themselves in a new environment, and they must become, at least for some time, a member of a new academic community which might be different from the one they have known so far. To some extent, their well-being, problem-free existence and acceptance by an academic community will depend on an open, flexible, tolerant and respectful attitude towards new and different things. What is also important is the proper preparation for the trip and sufficient knowledge about the culture of a given country. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that culture is a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon, and it is not easy to explain in a few simple words what it consists of, what influences it has and what one must think over before going to study abroad. In this case, it might be helpful to use models which present its essence in a simplified way and facilitate communication. The most famous one is the iceberg model (see Figure 1).

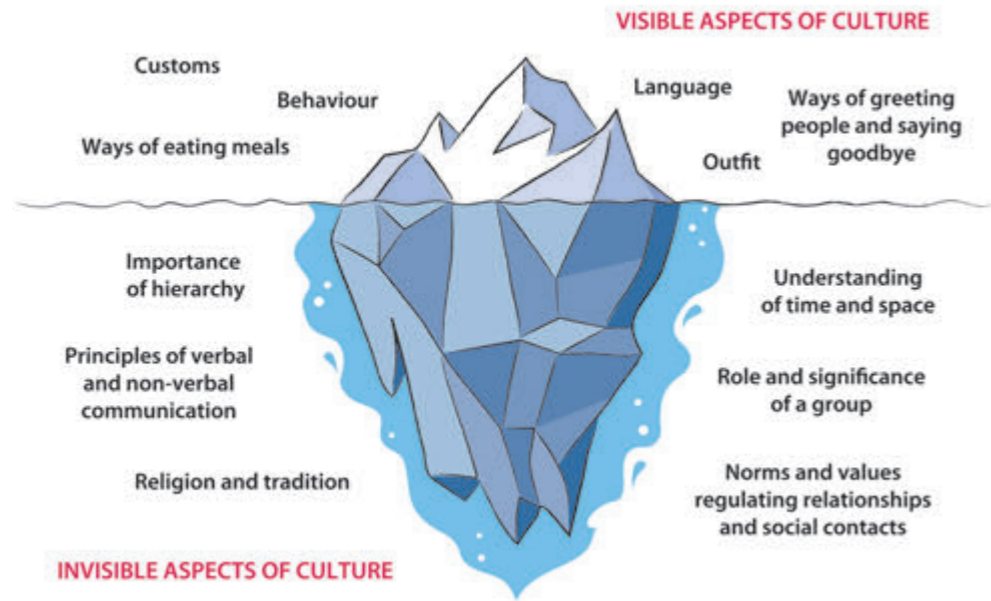


Figure 1. Culture – the iceberg model

Source: own work based on the culture model of E. H. Schein, The Open University, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/money-business/leadership-management/step-leadership/content-section-8>, accessed: 30/08/2020

In this model, all the manifestations of culture which can be seen correspond to the visible aspects, and therefore a smaller part of the iceberg. For example, we can easily notice when people wear different clothes and greet us and say goodbye in a different manner. We can also clearly see when students talking to a lecturer maintain a closer or greater distance than what we are used to. We can also observe whether classes and exams start and finish on time, and in what way they are conducted.

However, if we do not know anything about the culture of the country where we are going to study, and if we do not get prepared for the unknown, everything that we are about to encounter, we will have to “explain to ourselves” using our own system of values and attitudes. Norms, values and rules of a culture other than our own will remain, unfortunately, invisible



*Try to create a “CHECK LIST” and continuously monitor it to keep track of the points that you have already received an answer for*

and unknown to us, just like the submerged part of the iceberg. We will use our own “cultural filter” for everything that we see and hear. We will miss the chance to learn about other people’s way of thinking as well as the principles that they follow. We will never really understand them and we will not be able to help them understand us. We will not be aware of what makes us different or what unites us.

Studying in another country opens up many opportunities for development, but it is up to us whether we will only see the “tip of the iceberg” or whether we will find out what the whole iceberg looks like. And let’s not forget that when we leave for a different country, we are always ambassadors of our own culture. In the light blue boxes you can read good advice, important findings and funny stories about studying abroad.

# 1. Prepare Yourself at Home

## 1.1. Surrounding Environment of the University

Let's be honest, university studies are very important but life is not only about that. When you decide to study abroad you also undertake to move to a new cultural environment. You should gather additional information carefully about the surroundings of the university that you have chosen based on its educational offerings. The environment in which you will spend your life for the next few years will affect your mood and thus your scholastic performance. You will be more effective in an inspiring environment, so it is worth looking into some important parameters regarding the university surroundings during the preparation period, such as:


### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HOST COUNTRY

It is beneficial to have a brief knowledge of the history of the country you will be arriving in. Let's find out how history has shaped the local people. It is easier to accept the habits of a nation if we know what challenges people have faced throughout history and what they are proud of. It is worth reading about the historical relationship with the surrounding countries. This can provide you with useful information in many ways.

### GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Find out what the geographical environment of the country is like. Here are some examples:

- Which town or city is the university located within the country? What are the surrounding settlements like?
- Are there mountains nearby for winter sports?
- Are there hills for hiking?
- Is there a sea, lake, river, suitable for swimming, can you lounge near the shore?
- What are the characteristics of the surrounding areas? Are there any green spaces or parks nearby, or would you prefer to be in a busy metropolitan environment?
- Are there any tourist attractions?

 **Make a list of things to do and places to see while you are still at home. You will likely add more things to your list, but it will be good to prepare one prior to your arrival.**

### DEMOGRAPHY

- What is the population density of the host city? Please do your homework of the host city and environment, so that you will not be met with unexpected surprises when you arrive.

*A student from India has a hard time finding his place in a small town setting. The space is too big. He feels the streets are empty, he feels uncomfortable and complains to the mentor:*

- *I don't understand even though I come from a small town.*
- *How many inhabitants does your small town have?*
- *Only 30 million.*

### ENVIRONMENT

- How much green space is in the environment of the host university and city? Are there parks?
- Is there an industrial environment? Think about the fact that you may also want to get a job. It's good to know ahead of time what opportunities there may be in the area.
- Can you find the time to take up a job while studying? It is possible that in an industrial environment more practice-oriented education and better corporate relations with the university can be expected.

### SERVICES

- What services are available in the city and what are in close proximity to the university?
- What entertainment options such as museums, theatre, cinema, concert halls, and cultural programs are there?
- Where can you eat out at a restaurant or cafeteria, and what are the eating habits in the country?

*In England people like to eat sandwiches for lunch because it's fast. In the evening, a hot dinner is customary. At noon the parks are crowded, because everyone likes to eat their sandwiches and drink coffee there. In Hungary, however, lunch is the main meal, everyone likes to eat hot food. The restaurants offer a large variety of pre-made and freshly grilled dishes. It may be surprising to foreign students that there are relatively few sandwich bars to choose from, since there are mostly restaurants in every city.*

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Find out at home how to get from the airport to the university. Check the university website to see if there is an airport shuttle service.
- What available apps (maps, navigators) help with orientation? If possible, download it before departure.

- What is the public transport network (trains, bus network, and local transport) like? Traveling is fun, but you may have to spend several hours on public transport. Find out all the important information while you are still at home.
- Make sure to check if taxis are available in the area. Find out the local rates and customs for tipping the driver.
- What are the opportunities for leisure travel? Research at home about sightseeing options to visit the countryside and also vacation spots in surrounding countries. You may decide which ones to select after you arrive in the host country, but you will be much more confident if you arrive prepared.
- In case you would like to ride a bicycle, find out about the availability of rentals, and service available in the area. Are there bike paths in the city, or surrounding areas?

*While the goal is to eliminate cash everywhere in Europe on public transport, in Hungary it is not possible to pay on the bus by credit card. Passengers either buy a ticket from the bus driver or come on board with a pre-purchased ticket. This is certainly surprising for newcomers and they usually feel uncomfortable in case they do not have cash.*



*Be well prepared  
for all situations*

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Many students want to get a job during their studies to make their living easier. Look at the regulations in the country you arrive in:

- What permits are required?
- Under what conditions can students take up a job?
- Is there an organization that helps? Is there a career center at the university?

## ACTIVITIES

- What are the sports facilities?
- What clubs can you join?
- Can you play your favorite sport?
- Is there a sport that stands out in that city?
- Is there a university team in any sport?
- What equipment is worth taking with you?

## 1.2. Student Opinions

Moving to a new country with a different culture and customs is the adventure of a lifetime. However, once you've settled into your place and you have time to get into a routine, certain aspects of your new home will become more noticeable than when you first arrived. We highly recommend reading other students' opinions about their own experiences through online blogs, which was written by someone in a similar situation that you will be in!

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BLOGS

Before you start your journey from home to the foreign university, it is advisable to check some student blogs that were written by other international students. You may want to research what they recommend based on their own experiences. For example, they may give advice as to how you could best adapt to the new environment; what kinds of programs they might recommend for you to join; they may also recommend items to pack in your luggage that you will need in your new home; and they could also point out some important things that you may not have thought about.

Be aware that culture shock refers to the impact of moving from a familiar culture to an unfamiliar one. This impact includes the anxiety and feelings (such as surprise, disorientation, uncertainty, and confusion) felt when a person must

adapt to a different and unknown cultural or social environment. To overcome culture shock, you may want to understand first what it looks like:

- THE HONEYMOON STAGE** – As soon as you get to the new place, you are excited and find your new home interesting.
- THE DISTRESS STAGE** – You start missing your old home and start finding the differences between the new country and yours.
- THE ORIENTATION STAGE** – You start understanding the reasons that brought you to your new home and begin to feel more confident about fitting in with the new culture.
- THE ADAPTATION STAGE** – The new country starts feeling familiar. You embrace the differences and changes in your environment and as a result, you begin to feel comfortable.

Be mindful that this is a cycle and there is no real timeframe of how fast you'll get through each stage. Some people go back and forth between stages and that's okay! Now that you know how culture shock can affect you, let's take a look at some tips on how to overcome it easily:

### CONNECTION TO OTHERS – MAKE FRIENDS

The best way to fight off loneliness and homesickness is to talk to people and to get familiar with the new culture that surrounds you. It's a good idea to make friends with other international students that will also be going through the same experiences as you are. Remember, you are not alone in this. There isn't a tried-and-true recipe for making new friends in a new country. You may need to push yourself to be more outgoing than you would normally be at home, like trying a new activity that you've always wanted to do but have previously let your fear get in the way. In Hungary, many of the students are open and curious about different cultures so that should make it easier to make new friends.

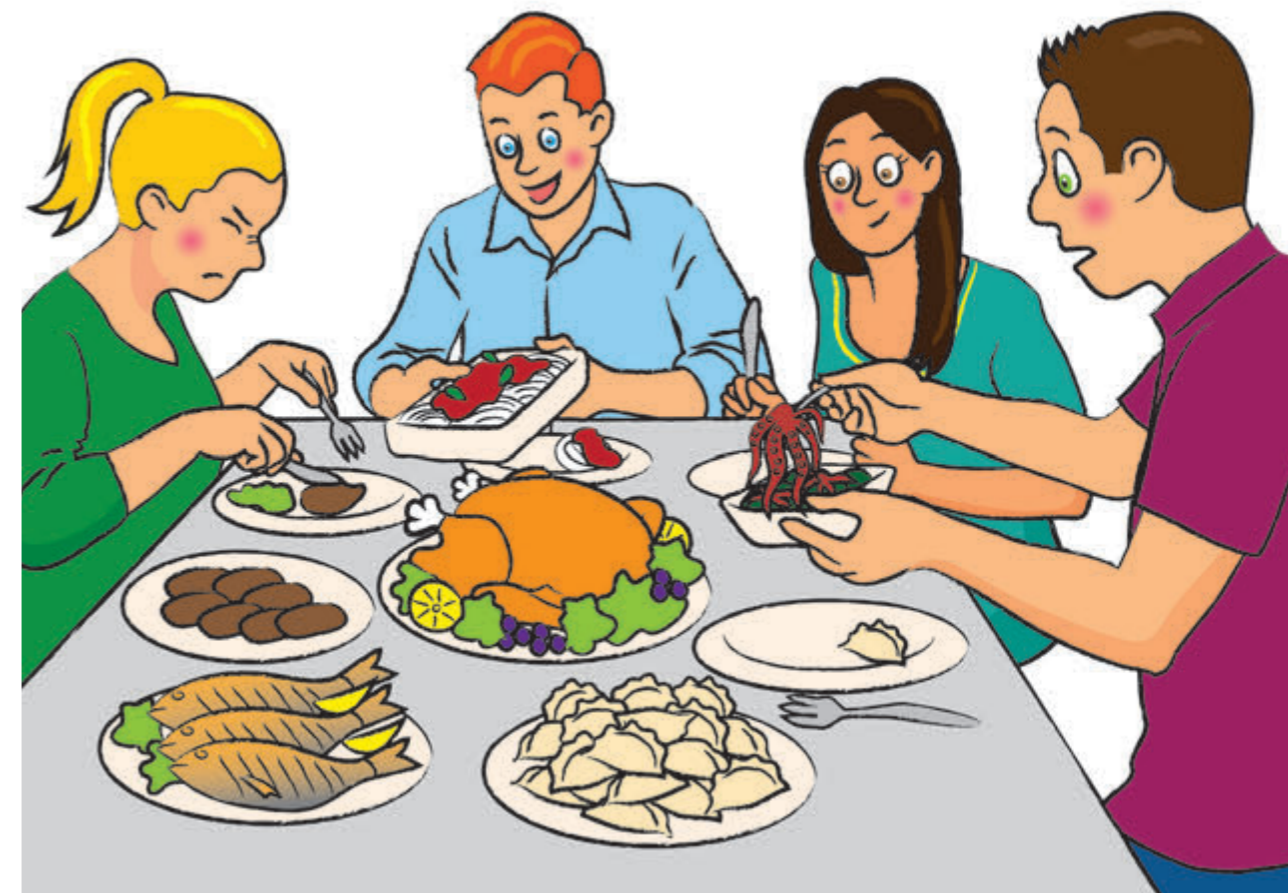
### GET INVOLVED – ACTIVITIES JUST FOR YOU

Do you like sports and teamwork? Or do you prefer to read a book and then talk about it at a book club? Whatever interests you, universities offer lots of activities (most of the time for free!). Get out of your room and try something new. Also, we highly recommend that you be the person who brings new ideas up.

### FOOD – CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Attending school in a foreign country doesn't mean you have to give up the comforts of your home. Before boarding the plane, make sure to get your favorite recipes from mom or dad. Consider hosting a recipe swap potluck dinner to get to

know your fellow classmates. Invite each new friend to bring their favorite dish from home, so you can each enrich your list of recipes for future meals and entertaining. Sharing dishes from different cultures will make the meal more enjoyable and it can prompt guests to engage in interesting conversations. In Hungary people are open to try new food, we highly recommend you to try their delicious local cuisine!



*Studying at a foreign university is a good opportunity to try local culinary specialties...*

### 1.3. Formalities

Your tutor is prepared to meet you, contact you on arrival. It is highly recommended that you arrive at your destination at the beginning of the semester in order to be able to participate in the orientation program and optimize your study opportunities.

#### LIST OF DOCUMENTS YOU WILL NEED FOR THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Forms and deadlines may vary depending on whether you are a degree student or an exchange student. Degree students present their documents to student services whereas exchange students to the international office. What are the key documents required to make your study abroad a success? Here is a general set of documents that you will need:

- **ACADEMIC INFORMATION**

The autumn and spring semester (teaching during the academic year)

- **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL NECESSARY TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

It goes without saying that a current passport will be required in order to enter a foreign country and to return home.

- **VISA/RESIDENCE FORMALITIES**

Many countries require a student visa. If your destination country requires a visa, be sure to apply well in advance of your expected departure. Confirm that the visa will cover your entire study abroad period.

*For students and citizens from the European Union it is not necessary to have a student visa to enter the EU. However, a valid passport is, of course, necessary. If you are not a citizen from the EU, you are advised to contact the Embassy or Consulate of the country of destination in your home country for entrance regulations prior to your departure. If you are a citizen of a European Union member state or Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, you are entitled to free movement and residence in EU countries.*

Students who come from other countries need to apply for a “student visa” at the consulate or embassy in their home country. Entry with a tourist visa is not acceptable for students.

The student visa incorporates the authorization for stay in the receiving country. It allows you to stay and study in the given country for up to the visa validity. Original Passport and copy of the page where personal information appears, as well as the page with the visa and entry stamp for the receiving country.

*The visa application has to be submitted to the consulate of the country where the permanent or temporary residence of the applicant is located or in the country of the applicant's nationality. If third country nationals wish to stay longer than 3 months they need to have a valid travel document, the necessary permits for return or continued travel and they should be able to verify the purpose of entry and stay, they should have both accommodation and enough financial resources to cover their costs plus a full healthcare insurance or sufficient financial resources necessary for taking out healthcare services.*

The application for a residence permit should be submitted to the Consulate of the given country where the permanent or temporary residence of the applicant is located or in the country of the applicant's nationality and will be judged by the competent Hungarian regional directorate.

Students who are third nationals can obtain a residence permit if they have full time legal student relationship with a registered public educational institution working in line with the public educational information system or wish to stay in the destination country in order to carry on full time studies organized by a state-recognized higher education institution or participate in a preparatory course for studies by a state-recognized higher education institution, and can prove they meet the language skill requirements.

For citizens of third countries, the Immigration Office issues a biometric document, the EU Blue Card, a work permit and a residence permit enabling highly-skilled non-EU citizens to work and live EU -wide.

- **THE APPLICATION FORM**

The applicant should fill in the application form carefully and properly.

- **FOREIGNER IDENTITY CARD**

The student residence permit may be renewed annually when the applicant provides proof that he/she still satisfies the requirements that entitled him/her to obtain a student visa and has achieved satisfactory academic results during the course preceding that which the renewal is being applied for.

- **PASSPORT SIZE PHOTOGRAPHS**

Always double check the dimensions of the passport size photo, be it admissions or visa.

- **CUSTOMS REGULATION**

*These regulations are not very different from the rules of other European countries It is forbidden to bring guns in or through the country. Certain types of food are also forbidden to import or export.*

- **EXPERIENCE DOCUMENTS**

If you are applying for grad school, make sure you have relevant experience documents.

## CERTIFICATES ABOUT YOUR STUDY

You will need your senior secondary certificates and their mark sheets. Copies of diplomas from your previous studies (Academic transcripts give the university full details about the courses and modules you studied at undergraduate level and the grades you received.)

### • PROOF OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

When applying to a degree abroad, chances are that you will study in English or another popular foreign language (German, French, etc.). Competitive exam scores: This is one important document if English is not your first language. This test certificate is extremely important and has a validity date. So make sure the certificate is valid while submitting it to the university.



*For this reason, universities need to know that language will not be a barrier in your studies; that you are able to understand and use that language at an academic level.*

### • STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This written document will signify who you are, what made you choose your career path, why you opted for that particular university, what are you planning to do after the course, interests and other personal details. A well-written statement will be the key to your way into the university. So take a good amount of time before you submit the statement of purpose.

### • MOTIVATION LETTER OR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Many students are confused about the requirement of including a statement of purpose, or motivation letter in their application.



*A motivation letter and a statement of purpose are very similar, but they are not the same thing. With a motivation letter universities expect you to focus more on how their program relates to your background and your professional plans. They might also want you to state which is the course or specialization you want to focus on during your studies.*

### • LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

People always want to know what others think of you. Find the right opportunity to ask for a recommendation letter from someone who you know for sure will nail it for you.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

Travel insurance is worth the investment should you get sick or have any serious medical issues. If you already have health insurance, check if it includes coverage for overseas care. If it doesn't, you can get a policy specific for overseas travel.



*To authorize residence permit, you should provide proof of sufficient health insurance for the length of your stay in the receiving country. Exchange students can take out the compulsory health insurance presenting the letter of admission right after they arrive in the receiving country. They are only covered from the first day of enrolment. Contact your insurance company. Applicants must take out public or private health insurance for all risks normally covered for nationals in the receiving country.*

EU citizens are insured on the basis of the European health insurance card when they are in another member state and are from the point of view of social security entitled to the same rights and have the same obligations as citizens of that given member state.

If you participate in an international student exchange program or study at a state institute, you are entitled to free medical care. Based on the valid agreement between the host and the home universities you are allowed to use the facilities of the social security system of the destination country.

Make sure your insurance is valid on the date you plan to arrive in the destination country and covers the entire time you plan to spend in the destination country. Acquire an insurance document which indicates the following information.

## BANK ACCOUNT

Bring all of the information needed from your bank account at home in order to receive transfers (name of the account holder, account number, name of the bank, IBAN and Swiftcode). Banking in a foreign country is quite different than what you are used to. You may not be able to use your ATM card or credit card the way you do at home. The easiest way around this is to set up a bank account once you arrive. In doing so, you can have your money nearby and a way to access it quickly. Check with your study abroad advisor to find out what you need to open an account.

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Produce proof of achievements and other certificates that will explain your talents and extracurricular activities you've undertaken. A declaration that you have sufficient financial means to pay for the period of stay, and which guarantees sufficient funds to be able to return to the country of origin is also required.

## RE-CHECK

Once you have all the right documents, re-check it as many times as you want. Have attested copies of all the documents in a folder and arrange it according to the check list. This will help you organize your application better.

## 1.4. How to prepare your luggage

The packing process is usually not just putting your daily life needs in a bag. However simple it may seem, there are several things to bear in mind while packing before going to study abroad. Before packing your suitcase, you need to check the essential factors that may affect your choices. We are writing about how to prepare your luggage for studying abroad and the different things to remember while you are making your luggage checklist.



*While packing your baggage, you have to take into consideration the place or the region where you will study. The key here is to be aware of some characteristics related to the destination country*

### CHECK THE WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The first factor you should be aware of is the destination country's weather type. To get some information regarding the weather of the country you're traveling to, we advise you to do some google search to determine if the country you are going to study has four distinct seasons or just one season. In the same direction, you should take into consideration the overall climate. The climate of the country where you will study abroad could significantly affect what and how to pack, so don't ignore it. Also note if your place of study abroad is in a different part of the continent, then the seasons might be different from what you expect.

*I still remember when I came to Hungary for the first time to complete my PhD entrance exam, it was three years ago on the 13th of May, I packed my travelling bag based on my country weather, in my country during this time of the year the weather usually tends to be summer also the temperature records approximately 25-30 degrees. When I arrived in Hungary it was night, and I was wearing shorts and a short pullover I went out of the airport, and it was very cold. I realized then that I committed a big mistake while I was packing my bag because all of my packed stuff was inappropriate for the weather here. I felt very frustrated and confused the whole night.*

### WHAT NOT TO LEAVE AT HOME

To know what to bring and what to leave, you need to take into consideration the second factor, whether the destination region is urbanized or not. You have to know if there will be shops that suit you if you want to buy some stuff. Or else you ought to put everything that you need. Unless it is necessary, you should not use your limited baggage capacity for three towels and several bottles of shampoo or any stuff that can be found in the country you are traveling to. Instead, figure out just how accessible you will be to the shops and then determine what and how to pack to study abroad.

*The first two years here (in Hungary), I used to bring with me almost everything, whenever I had the opportunity to visit my homeland, "spices, some kinds of special traditional food ingredients, some frozen food, different seasons' clothes, toothpaste, but later on, everything changed, I became more familiar with the country and the language, and I could easily find what I need, even sometimes some traditional food ingredients can be found.*

### CLOTHING FOR SPECIAL EVENTS OR SPORTS ACTIVITIES

For your first arrival in the country, you will need sportswear, because you need it before you have a chance to go shopping. Usually, all kinds of sportswear are very costly if you buy them from the shops. However, later, when you get used to the country and the country's sportswear online shops and outlets, it will be very affordable.

*Please do not forget to bring with you your traditional costumes for international parties or special events.*

## HOBBY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Everybody has a hobby, and some hobbies need their own instruments such as the guitar, or if you like video games you have to bring playing machine (PS4, Xbox), etc. with you. Regarding religion, I would say bring with you what helps you in practicing some religious activities.



*Universities usually provide a place to practice religion, but you have to take care of the necessary supplies.*

## ESSENTIAL ITEMS

Some essential items are needed, and it is not possible to go to another country without taking them with you, items such as mobile device plus charger, Laptop plus charger plus padded case, Power adapters. In addition to that, you may need flip flops to use as shower shoes.

## 1.5. Medical Preparations

Nowadays, several countries have updated specific medical testing criteria for student visa applicants, so remember to prepare your health test reports while preparing for your study visa. Over the past couple of years, the medical requirements of students' visas have increased.

*When I was applying for the visa, I had to attach many medical tests' reports like any other international student, so I did, but when I came to Hungary, I didn't bring the reports with me, I thought they were not necessary. However, the law here is different because the visa you get when you are at home it only lasts for 15 days, then you should go to the University immigration office to renew it for one or two years after I arrived and completed the entrance exam I had to go to the mentioned office to renew my permit residence, there they asked me to attach the medical reports with the other required papers, I didn't have them, and here they usually ask the students to have the original documents, I asked the employee there who was serving me to arrange a consultation with the director of the office, so he did, I explained to the office director my situation, and I asked him if he would allow me to submit copies he said that it's ok by this time. I asked my family at home to scan the medical documents required and send them back to me by email, and this is what happened.*



*Where am I?*

Recently, most countries worldwide require all international students to have full-body checkups with medical reports and certificates from a trusted clinic in their countries. So, if you're planning to study overseas, it is also essential to be aware of the clinical checks you will need to perform once you're done with the admission.

## WE RECOMMEND A FULL MEDICAL EXAMINATION BEFORE YOUR JOURNEY

Appropriate preventive testing for communicable and non-communicable diseases has become a vital component of a residence permit process to ensure that candidates who could be infected are recognized even before entering the country. The standards for medical testing differ according to the country.

## THE HEALTH CARE DOCUMENTS YOU MAY NEED ARE

- BLOOD TEST**  
 Blood test could deliver information and details on kidney and liver mechanism, full blood count (such as white and red blood cells, platelets and hemoglobin), and different kinds of hepatitis, HPV, and HIV.
- DENTAL CHECKUPS**  
 Especially the dental needs should be taken into account. If you know you're going to need dental surgery, it can add up to the cost. It is definitely worth having an overall dental checkup before you leave.
- VACCINATION**  
 Even though the country you are planning to go has high levels of public health standards, it's always worth making sure that your immunizations and vaccines reports are sufficient and up to date.
- PRESCRIPTION DRUGS OR MEDICINES ARE AVAILABLE**  
 For your first trip to the destination country where you will study, you should make sure that you bring with you all your prescribed drugs or medicines because sometimes it may take time to know if those drugs or medicines are available or how you can get them.

*From my childhood, I have a seasonal skin allergy. I have been using a mix of creams for more than ten years, when I came to Hungary to study here I forgot to bring my cream mix with me, I searched a lot for the creams, but unfortunately, I didn't find all of them, so I had to go back home and bring it again, after two months I went back home, and I brought the mix with me. But later on, after I became familiar with the country, I found all the creams needed for the mix, even I found a better natural treatment.*

## 2. Integration in a New Environment

### ARRIVING AT THE HOST UNIVERSITY YOU SUCCESSFULLY

- Met with your coordinator (if provided);
- Registered at the International Office;
- Checked into a dormitory / apartment;
- Received a student ID (Student ID card);
- Passed a medical certificate and a copy of insurance;
- Attended an Orientation session;
- Familiarized with the safety rules in force at the host university;
- Checked the class schedule;
- Learned the venue of classes and how to get there.

*When I was entering in foreign university, I realized how important it is to follow a checklist: a list of requested documents. When I first applied, I was disqualified already during the consideration of the application, because I submitted not a copy of the original diploma, but only a translation. For this reason, I missed a whole year. The second time, of course, I was already more attentive and did everything right. The principle of a checklist – you need to submit strictly those documents that are on the list, without missing anything. Maybe it is even worth sending something extra: for example, certificates of additional courses, participation in a scientific conference, internship.*

### 2.1. Adapting to a New Environment

The realization that our “habitual” way of life, perception of things and behavior may turn out to be “wrong” or “not like” as in people of another country causes students a state of cultural shock.

*Before you go anywhere, read articles or books about important cultural traditions or customs. Furthermore, read something about the history of the place you will be visiting or moving to. Understanding the history of a place will explain why people may act or react a certain way to specific topics of conversation. Overall, be very respectful to all people and this respect will often be returned.*

### HOW TO OVERCOME CULTURAL SHOCK?

- Be open to new experiences.
- Keep in touch with home, family and friends.
- Engage in your hobbies, look for new interesting activities.
- Communicate, make new friends.
- Learn something new every day.
- Take an interest in and study the history and culture of the host country.
- Read local newspapers, magazines, watch movies and TV series, visit theaters, concerts, museums and exhibitions.
- Learn more about the language of the host country, including youth slang, local dialects and idioms.
- Move, play sports.
- Be patient. Remember that adaptation to life abroad does not happen in one day.
- Take with you from home several important things for you to comfort (photographs of friends and family, a favorite cup, etc.)




Family ties

*Everyone experiences culture shock. Looking back on the experience, many say it was a source of insight and personal growth.*

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

If you feel that you are unable to cope with problems on your own, do not hesitate to seek psychological help: Psychological counseling department of the host university (find out the details from the host university coordinator); send a request to the Psychological counseling department by e-mail “Skype consultation for a student on mobility”.

 *Don't Let Culture Shock Stop You from Studying Abroad. Study abroad isn't all weekend getaways and late-night parties. It's a challenge, an introduction to a new culture, and an emotional roller coaster at times. However, it's one worth taking. We promise you though, once you're home you'll forget about all the things that irritated you and treasure the memories and friends you made.*

2.2. Event Calendar

ORIENTATION WEEK

Orientation Week is organized a week before the beginning of the academic year, when arriving international students are welcomed at the University. It is designed to help you, as a new student, to meet your new classmates, settle into university life and get to know your new surroundings.

What happens during Orientation Week?

Orientation Week includes important and serious activities, such as signing the study agreement, as well as general fun stuff, like getting to know new people throughout the week and participating in the welcoming party at the end of the week.

During Orientation Week you will:

- meet other international students and staff of the International Department;
- receive the timetable of your study program and information on how to use the student's information systems;
- get your student card;
- have the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the University campus;
- receive information about health services and safety in host country;
- register for studies and sign the study contract;
- receive information about immigration procedures;
- be able to participate in other social and cultural activities organized by the International Department.

Top three tips to enjoy your first week...

1. Don't be afraid. Keep in mind that the majority of the people attending orientation are international students just like you. So, begin conversations with everyone, you have nothing to lose.
2. Wear comfy shoes and clothes. There will be a lot of walking during orientation week and being comfy will make your experience so much better.
3. Ask questions. If you are not sure about something, just ask. All the staff and student leaders are there because they want to help YOU. There is no such thing as a silly question.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet is a wonderful place to start. Whether you want to learn about dining customs, religious beliefs, or simple cultural 'do's and don'ts' specific to the country you're moving to, there are plenty of online resources you can use to find out what you need to.

Accepted international students can join Erasmus+ on Facebook to get in touch with the other students coming for their studies or to contact students from previous semesters who may give you some useful tips.

ACTIVITIES

*The university is not just what happens in the classroom.*

Student Life consists of numerous activities and organizations such as Student Government, the Student Leadership Program and Cultural Events, Common Program with Local Students, Sport Clubs etc. Additionally, the university offers a host of support services that are designed to help students maximize their full learning potential. Some of these services include tutoring, academic advising and career counseling along with government programs. Students unite in student organizations to relax from their studies and find like-minded people at the university. Each student can find a student organization that she/he likes.

Join in

*Push yourself, try something new and make the most of your time abroad. Make sure you are part of any organized trips or events, join clubs and university societies – you could even become a Student Ambassador.*

Check out all of the programs (official site) and services to offer and enjoy your study time at the host university.

## 2.3. Student Service Process

### PEER MENTORS

In addition to the assistance provided by the International Office during the Orientation Week, the new incoming international students have an opportunity to get a Tutor – a local student who can meet them on their arrival, accompany them to their accommodation, help you get familiarized with life in a foreign city, answer various questions regarding your stay in the host country in general etc.

Peer Mentors aim to link international and home students by providing exchange students with a helping hand for an easier start to their stay, while also giving international students an opportunity to practice a foreign language and meet new people.



*Upon arrival, the student meets with his/her Peer Mentor, who helps with check-in, arrangement at a new place, paperwork, etc.*

A week before arrival or earlier, the Peer Mentor or Tutor usually contacts the student by email; you can ask worrying questions, discuss living conditions, training and more. A Peer Mentor (tutor) can also help you contact with scientific consultants.

Also, on the day of arrival, the student receives a large stack of documents, which must be completed and returned within two weeks.

Across a few days after arrival, the University organizes a meeting of students and tutors with representatives of the university, which talk about formal requirements, explain how to fill out documents, there you can raise issues you are interested in.

Thus, the first week is almost completely devoted to filling out various documents and request permission on other organizational issues.

In addition, in the information center, you can take a free map of the city in English and information booklets that may be useful for foreigners.

## 2.4. Safety and Emergency Behavior

- Check out the traveler's safety issues in the host country
- Upon arrival abroad, register at the embassy of your country of citizenship and write down the contact number in emergency situations.
- Make sure you bring along a copy of the Mobility Consent.
- Always have your health insurance and insurance company contact number on hand.

### IF YOU ARE IN AN EMERGENCY

1. Do not panic and stay calm. Take a deep breath. Convince yourself that you can handle the circumstances.
2. Inform immediately:
  - coordinators of the host university;
  - outbound mobility coordinators;
  - family.

## 2.5. Program Policies

In this chapter you will learn important rules of the international mobility program, including those regarding:

### LEARNING PROCESS

Students are required to complete the Learning Agreement or the requirements of the Program, to attend all classes in the disciplines and to pass all mid-term and final tests provided for in the curriculum.

### LAWS

Students who come to study in another country are required to comply with all legal norms (laws) and acts of that country. Liability is provided for violation of any legal norms. Ignorance of these laws does not give exemption from legal consequences.

### APPEARANCE REQUIREMENTS

Please dress according to every event and keep an eye on the local appearance requirements (e.g. at school, in church, when visiting large cities, as well as evening events).

### ALCOHOL

Students are required to observe all laws with regard to the minimum drinking age. Minimum drinking age is 21. Students breaking this law may be considered for Program dismissal.

### DRUGS

Program participants shall not possess or use drugs which are illegal in the host country. Violators of this policy will be considered for Program dismissal. A verified violation would normally include physical evidence, student admission or reliable witnesses.

### DAMAGE

If you have caused property damage to third persons, university, in the zone rest, dorms, etc. you will have to indemnify before leaving the city learning. Please check if your insurance will cover damage.



*Different countries, different rules*

## 3. Research on Everyday Life

### 3.1. Personal Space

#### SITUATION 1

In the secretary's office in one of the university departments students are served at a special counter located near the entrance door. After entering the room, one of the foreign students went past the counter, approached the secretary's desk, leaned over her and asked about the professor's duty hours. The secretary felt awkward with the student being so close to her and asked him to stand behind the counter. The student told her not to instruct him where to stand because he felt comfortable in that place. He was indignant that he had to speak to the secretary in a standing position and had no chair next to the secretary's desk to sit on.

*Everyone has some space around them which gives them a sense of comfort, and in which they feel safe. The size of this space, usually called personal space, private sphere or personal distance, differs depending on the culture. In some countries, people having a conversation feel comfortable when they are next to each other, while in other places they prefer to keep a distance of, for example, at least 1 metre. Before you go to study abroad, you should find out what distance you should keep so that the people you talk to don't feel embarrassed.*

#### SITUATION 2

After the last class of the year-long course, students organised a small farewell meeting, thanking each other for successful cooperation. At one point, one of the participants, a student from Spain, approached the teacher, thanked them politely for their work, shook their hand and when leaving, pat them on their shoulder. Such a gesture, generally perceived as patronizing (e.g. in Poland), could be treated not only as faux-pas but also as an affront. In Poland, many people still believe that it is the younger person who should bow and greet first, while the older one has the privilege of reaching out their hand in the first place.

*The personal space of Spanish people is more like an arena for interaction with another person rather than an enclave that gives them a sense of security. Approaching the Polish interlocutor at arm's length, the Spaniard still maintains a distance, while the Pole is already losing the sense of safety.*

*This intimacy and openness are manifested not only in mutual relationships, where the elderly treat young people on a partnership (equal) basis, but also in everyday language. Being on a first-name basis is a common phenomenon. It*

*is believed to facilitate communication, and many academic teachers prefer to be addressed in this way. Courteous forms of address and polite expressions are reserved for people holding important positions at universities or departments, and for the oldest and most distinguished lecturers. One should note that addressing someone by their first name is not a sign of lack of respect or impoliteness (which would be perceived in this way in Polish culture).*

#### OTHER EXAMPLES

- A student from East Europe came to a university Career Office in order to obtain some support in making a decision regarding his future career. At the end of the conversation, satisfied with its course and outcomes, impressed by the career adviser's attention and professional approach, opened his arms in an attempt to give them a hug. Not being accustomed to this type of reaction, the career office employee was confused, and as a result, the student felt uncomfortable, too.
- A student answered the phone while shopping in a store. She continued her conversation for a long time in hands-free mode, moving between shelves and ignoring the presence of other people. Such behaviour in her country is no exception. However, the details of her conversation were embarrassing for other shoppers – they did not feel the need to learn about the stranger's private matters.
- During an international course lasting several months, in one group appeared a Latino student and a young girl from Egypt (a Muslim). They kept working together on a project several hours a day. Once it was completed, all students rushed to embrace each other, but the young Egyptian female student was confused and only shook hands with her mate. When he tried to give her a hug, she got embarrassed, took a step back and hid behind other girls.



*In different cultures people adopt different distance in personal contacts. Find out what it looks like in the country where you would like to study*

## 3.2. Concept of Time

What are the expectations of the host country with regards to punctuality, it is possible that showing up late may be acceptable in your country, but be certain about what is expected in the host country, as you will have to adjust to the local expectations.

#### SITUATION 1

Before the beginning of the semester (in September), a foreign student asked for an exam session schedule for the upcoming academic year (for the winter and summer semester), including the exact name of the examiner, date, time and room in which a given exam will take place. However, at the university where he began his studies, the dates of exam sessions are set no earlier than one month prior to them, the room number is given a few days before the exam, whereas giving the name of the examiner is not common practice. Students find out who will be conducting the exam during classes or lectures. In the foreign student's country, all students and lecturers receive by e-mail a detailed exam session schedule with all dates and necessary details at the beginning of each academic year.

*Time is perceived differently depending on the country. In some of them (monochronic cultures), all events, the rhythm of the day, semester and academic year, as well as meetings at the university **are strictly organised** by schedules, plans and diaries. Being professional in such countries means being punctual and having the ability to complete tasks as planned. Changing dates and late arrivals are not well seen, and what counts is being "just in time". In other countries, the approach to time is more flexible (polychronic cultures). Schedules, plans and diaries are treated **as general reference points** that can be modified as needed. Being professional in such countries means managing time in such a way as to be on time with everything, not necessarily strictly sticking to the plan. What counts is the final result, and a slight delay is not particularly important. If you are planning to study in another country, find out how important time is for its citizens.*

#### SITUATION 2

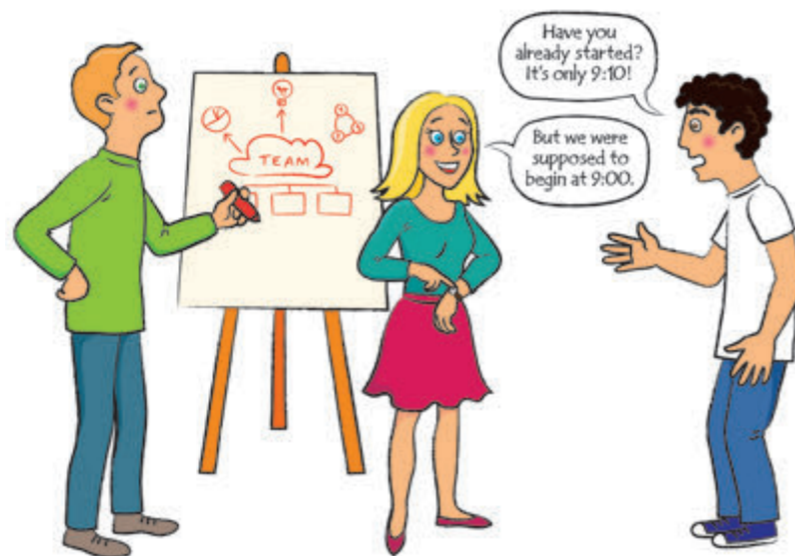
A female student from the Czech Republic received a message that at 5 pm there was an integration meeting – a night out in a bowling club. Those who were willing to participate in that event were asked to gather at the meeting point at 4:30 pm. She was sure that an academic quarter applies to all students' activities, including the less formal ones, and was surprised that when she arrived there at 4:45 pm, everybody had already left.

*In Poland, there are two popular terms of "academic quarter" or "student's quarter", according to which students are allowed to leave classes without any consequences if a teacher is more than 15 minutes late. This also works the*

other way round, allowing the student to be late no more than 15 minutes for their classes without consequences. However, the second option is not a rule and some lecturers do not tolerate the fact that students are late. It should be emphasised that the concept of the “academic quarter” applies only to classes at the university, not to any other activities.

#### OTHER EXAMPLES

- At the beginning of the academic year, after the first lecture, students decided to arrange a night out and have some fun. The place was not a problem as the neighbourhood was full of little charming pubs and bars. However, setting the right time appeared to be a lot more challenging. Several people wanted to meet right after dinner, at 8 pm, to be able to see something before it got dark and have enough time to get a good night's sleep (a group of students from Central Europe). Others suggested a little later, around 11 pm, so that it would be cooler and more pleasant (students from the Balkans). Meanwhile, local students suggested 1:00 a.m. because the most fashionable venues were opened at this time, whereas “11 pm is the time when children meet up” (students from the Iberian Peninsula). Finally, everybody decided to meet at 8 pm in order to have more time to get to know each other as this appeared to be the most important goal of their meeting.
- Students from countries where a more flexible approach to time is displayed often treat deadlines for submitting papers or essays as a starting point for negotiations with their teacher. They try to convince him or her to give them more time to complete a task due to the poor knowledge of the language, poor emotional state or feeling homesick. In countries where time is linear, has its beginning and its end, and its resources are limited, students usually organise their lives setting indirect goals or deadlines. Failure to meet deadlines or achieve goals can be interpreted as a signal of low work ethics, incompetence or even ignorance.



*In different cultures, the issue of punctuality is treated differently.*

*In some countries, being punctual means arriving 10 minutes earlier, while in others 10 minutes late is not a problem*

### 3.3. Care for yourself and the environment

Hygienic habits; each culture has its own specific habits of hygiene. We would only like to point out that some habits are different, and to make you aware of the differences in order to help you adapt

#### SITUATION 1

At one of the universities students celebrate “Juwenalia” (a university festival) in May every year. During the day, numerous meetings, concerts and various events take place on the campus. In the evening, students often get together for a barbecue. One year, students from Switzerland were also invited. Unlike their peers, instead of food, they brought with them a lot of plastic bags. Seeing astonished glances, they explained that they would clean up after the party, sort all garbage and throw it into proper containers. Host students were very surprised because until then nobody had bothered cleaning, leaving it to the university administrative staff.

*In many countries, people respect the surrounding environment and live in harmony with nature. They feel part of the natural world, try not to interfere with the natural environment and not change it. They protect their cultural heritage not only in the form of monuments, but also nature landscapes. However, there are also countries where people change and tame the natural environment, making it suitable for their needs so that they can live comfortably. Regardless of which attitude you share, make sure that the place you leave is clean and tidy.*

#### SITUATION 2

A group of young men, students from Eastern Europe, crowded at the entrance to the lecture hall. The rest of the students were standing quite a distance from them. The reason for keeping such a distance, as it turned out, was the intense smell of perfume used by the former. After the class, a lecturer told them in a gentle and courteous manner that the odour they spread was suffocating and disturbing to other class participants. The foreign students were surprised and angry, claiming that for them perfume was a sign of good taste, luxury and social status, also because the fragrance they used was branded and expensive. They exclaimed that if someone could not afford that, they were for sure jealous, but that was not their problem!

*We all use perfume for aesthetic and hygienic reasons. A fragrance is treated as an element of someone's outfit and should be appropriate for the occasion. Some types of perfume are suitable for office work, whereas others for a romantic evening. If you know that you are going to be in a larger group of people e.g. in the means of public transport, at a university or in an office, you should make sure that your fragrance is delicate and not disturbing to others.*

**SITUATION 3**

A group of students from Italy, who studied at a Ukrainian university with a double degree program, had some free time between two lectures. It was wonderful summer weather, so they took their mats, books and notes from their backpacks and sat comfortably on green grass in the shade. However, their cheerful conversation and rest were interrupted by a security man who told them politely, yet firmly, that it was forbidden to walk and sit on the lawn. The Italian students were surprised at this rule, but had no other choice than to take their belongings and move to a different place.

*Many Ukrainian universities still maintain strict institutional rules of conduct on campus. Their areas are planned and arranged not for the convenience and comfort of students but rather for visual aesthetics and harmony. Although some of those rules are being gradually modified, it is being done at a quite slow pace. Therefore, foreign students are advised to treat seemingly illogical and atavistic norms as well as prohibitions with patience and understanding.*



*Cultural difference or lack of care?*

**OTHER EXAMPLES**

- Students from Spain, who came to study at one of the universities in Central Europe as part of their scholarship, travelled by buses and trams with many other passengers. They were taken aback by the travel conditions, especially by the smell in public transport vehicles. They asked discreetly and tactfully their educators and local students why people living there did not use any deodorants.
- In Spain, during a student exchange program, students from various countries lived together in one wing of the dorm and used a common bathroom. In the bathroom they kept their sponge bags with toiletries as well as their towels. They used to do that until it turned out that one student from China had been using a towel that belonged to a female student from Poland. When the young woman discovered that her towel was damp although she had not used it, the Chinese student admitted that he had dried himself with it after a shower. He did not think it would be a problem because the towel was hung in the shared bathroom. Besides, he used it after the shower, which meant that he was clean and that should not be an issue. As a result, an enormous row broke out, and since then everyone kept their belongings in their rooms, until the exchange program came to an end.

*Everyone should take care of cleanliness and order around them, especially when using shared rooms. The sense of cleanliness and order is usually an individual matter, but some differences between countries can also be observed. In some cultures this is treated very restrictively, whereas in others – more liberally. Remember that when going to another country, you should adapt to the standards applicable there.*

**3.4. Appearance**

Dressing; mention possible differences plus pictures of young Europeans in summer and winter. Makeup, hairstyle.

**SITUATION 1**

A female student always came to class wearing strong make-up, long nails painted bright red, high heels, see-through clothing (some underwear was visible), and a short dress or skirt (of mid-thigh length). She was always very well prepared, even better than others. Male students from the same group, as well as some female ones, clearly had problems with concentration, and it was possible to notice that they were throwing a glance at the young woman. When asked by the lecturer (after classes, during a face-to-face conversation) what type of outfit students from her country were supposed to wear, she replied that “it should be elegant and festive” because university classes are a special occasion that should be highlighted with proper clothing. When asked whether the “proper clothing” was exactly what she was wearing, she said “yes”.

**SITUATION 2**

At the beginning of the academic year there was a ceremony attended by the university rector, a group of professors and students. Suddenly, in the auditorium appeared some foreign students who were about to start their new semester. Surprisingly, they were wearing sweatshirts, jeans and colourful T-shirts. Compared to other students who had elegant and festive outfits, they looked like a group of tourists that had lost their way. Their clothes were completely inadequate to the occasion. No wonder they felt uncomfortable – they were afraid that their attitude could be perceived as disrespectful by other participants of the event.

*The saying “Clothes make the man” takes on a special meaning in a culturally diverse environment. In every country there are different ideas about what and when to wear, what is widely accepted, and what is better to give up. It is very likely that the university you are going to has a different dress code than the one you already know. Your appearance, clothing and hairstyle send signals to the environment and inform it not only about your personality traits, aesthetic needs and a sense of style but also whether you share the same values and whether you respect the applicable rules. Before the trip, it is worth investing some time in learning about the culture of clothing of the country in which you are going to study. This will allow you to avoid many awkward situations and better find yourself in a new environment.*

**OTHER EXAMPLES**

- A student from Greece came to study at a university in one of the countries of Central Europe, and expected cold weather. Being far-sighted, he changed his clothes on the plane and put on an anorak, a scarf, gloves and a cap. However, after landing, he was surprised to discover that the September weather was nice and sunny. As a result, he arrived at the university hot and tired. And he knew that he still needed to buy some proper clothes.
- A final exam at one of universities gathered local and foreign students who were supposed to take it. The former were wearing elegant and classic clothes – dark dresses, skirts, suits and ties. The latter, a group of students from Eastern Europe, chose folk style clothing – beautiful white shirts with rich and colourful embroidery. The contrast of style and outfit was surprising for everyone.
- A student from Cyprus was supposed to take part in the Erasmus + program and move to a university in Estonia. Before leaving, she wanted to get ready for her trip and read different materials about the history and culture of this country. She also checked the weather forecast, paying special attention to current temperatures. For her trip, she chose an outfit which she believed was adequate to the temperature – a T-shirt and a sweatshirt. The temperature was supposed to be around 22 degrees Celsius. However, at the airport she started to feel uncomfortable because other travellers had completely different clothes. After leaving the airport she was totally shocked because outside it

was freezing cold and windy. The student realised that when checking the temperature she had not seen that it was 22 degrees Celsius but below zero.

*At most universities, the concept of appropriate clothing for classes is quite broad. There are, however, some general rules that should be followed. They concern, among others, avoiding strong exposure of one's body. The boundaries of so-called good taste are arbitrary and have their own cultural conditions. Find out what it is like in the country where you want to study.*



*University students wear all styles of clothes and it varies from country to country. However, you should be careful not to cause offence with your dressing style*

### 3.5. Eating Habits

Take notes of restaurants open hours, where to buy groceries for cooking, get familiar with the customs within the host country, give the country's culinary habits a try, especially with regards to the traditional local cuisine.

#### SITUATION 1

During a lecture, a student took out his lunch box, a bottle of mineral water, and started eating his meal. Having noticed that, a lecturer asked him to stop eating and wait for a break. The student smiled and replied that he was very hungry and if he could eat something, it would be easier for him to focus on the lecture, stop thinking about the food and wait for the break. He added that he had some cookies for dessert and he could give some to the lecturer as well as other students in the group. In his country, students can eat and drink in class and nobody minds.

*Each country has its own unique food culture (table manners). We differ not only in terms of what we eat, how we prepare our dishes, how we serve them, and where and when we eat them, but also in terms of what we do not eat and how we behave during meals. Adopting new eating habits takes time and foreign students often encounter many difficulties during this process. You can avoid them if, before your trip, you find out what dishes will be on your table and what rules and manners should be followed.*

#### SITUATION 2

During a socialising event, foreign students, who were about to start a new semester at a university in Poland, were offered some traditional Polish dishes. Arranging the menu took some time, and young people were trying to choose something really tasty and unique. Finally, they decided to prepare sour cucumbers and cabbage stew – a traditional Polish dish made of sour cabbage, different types of meat, prunes and mushrooms. However, students from Scandinavian countries, who came to the meeting and tried the dish, were surprised with its sour taste and thought that they were given something spoiled.

*Pickling is one of the oldest natural methods of preserving and storing food. In Poland, pickled cucumbers and cabbage, as well as dishes prepared from them, are considered tasty and healthy. It is well known that food preserved in this way contains a lot of vitamins and is a valuable source of magnesium, calcium, phosphorus and potassium. That's why you shouldn't miss the opportunity to try it.*

#### OTHER EXAMPLES

- German students, who were invited by their Polish peers to a birthday party, came with their own food. When it was

their turn to organise a socialising event, they did not prepare any food, being convinced that Polish guests would bring something with them, just as they do in their country. For the Polish students, it was very surprising.

- During a break, a Chinese female student went to a canteen. When she got her food, she started looking for chopsticks among cutlery. Although more than 2 billion people use them, she couldn't find them in the canteen. When she heard from the staff that they didn't have any chopsticks, she was shocked with the perspective of using a fork and a knife till the end of her stay.
- A student from a Mediterranean country was staying with a Polish host family. Getting used to new meal times required from him a lot of flexibility. In his country, early breakfast usually consisted of a coffee and a cigarette, whereas second breakfast – of another coffee and a doughnut. At 1 pm he would eat lunch, in the afternoon – some snacks, and between 9 and 11 pm – heavy dinner. His new Polish family served rich and royal breakfast in the morning, slightly less substantial lunch in the afternoon and very modest supper in the evening (for beggar rather than a king). What is more, they had fixed meal times – 7:30 am, 3 pm and 7 pm. That was the time when the whole family gathered at the table.
- In China, it is a sign of appreciation to burp at the dinner table after a meal. It shows that you enjoyed the food and you were well fed. Many parts of Asia it is considered acceptable to slurp your noodles to show that you are enjoying your food. However, in Europe burping and slurping in public are very impolite and strongly not recommended.

*Not all countries pay the same attention to providing varied meals suitable for people on different diets. In some countries it is normal to prepare, for example, special lunch proposals for people on a vegetarian or vegan diet, while in others there are no ready-made proposals and you have to compose the right set yourself, which is not always easy. Before leaving for a foreign university, check whether you are not going to have any problems with your diet.*



*If you follow a special diet, don't rely on chance. Starving is not good, be foresighted*

### 3.6. Religious Practices

Are there communities of practice and places of worship in your religion, and does your host university provide such facilities?

#### SITUATION 1

One day groups of students were presenting and discussing their projects which they had prepared in order to obtain a credit. During their presentations, the lecturer was asking questions in order to check the level of their knowledge about the issues they were talking about. One of the students, who always actively participated in class, was silent. He did not say anything, even though his peers asked him to do so. As a result, the whole group obtained a lower mark than they had expected, and could not hide their disappointment. Finally, one student said: "If you didn't feel like doing this, you should have told us about it. You needn't have joined our group." The student replied that he was Muslim and due to Ramadan he had not eaten anything since morning. It was 6 pm, he was feeling bad, dizzy and could hardly sit straight in his chair. He regretted that he had come to class, but he did not want to leave his mates, and he was sure he would be able to take part in the discussion. Eventually, the lecturer scheduled another date of presentation for that group after Ramadan.

**!** Religion plays a huge role in shaping cultural identity and the perception of other cultures. It influences individual views, attitudes, value systems, as well as norms and rules of social life. These rules relate to, among others, meal times, clothing or free days during the academic year (e.g. Christmas, Easter). Europe is characterised by religious and cultural diversity. It is worth benefiting from it while studying in another country!

#### SITUATION 2

During a trip around a big academic city in Western Europe organised as part of adaptation and language course for students from Eastern Europe, a group of female Russian students refused to visit historic Catholic churches. They were convinced that it was a mortal sin. Referring to publications presenting the views of some monks – theologians (which do not reflect any official teaching of the Orthodox Church), they believed that all Christians, except the Orthodox, are apostates of true faith. Visiting churches belonging to other denominations was inadvisable and idolatrous. The whole situation was troublesome for the tour guide and for the rest of the visitors who were forced to verify their own views on this matter and decide whether they were going to enter the church or stay outside.

**!** Regardless of our religious beliefs, the outfit in which you enter a temple or church should be neat. When visiting places of worship, your clothing should not display nudity. Women should remember to cover their shoulders and cleavage, and wear skirts of proper length. Men, on the other hand, should wear clothes other than shorts or

short-sleeved T-shirts. Many savoir-vivre books emphasise that shorts are an outfit suitable only for the beach or your own garden. If you follow these rules, you will not have any problems.

#### SITUATION 3

When during the first class participants were asked to provide various information about themselves e.g. their name days, students from the Erasmus+ exchange program were confused. In their culture nobody celebrates the day of the patron saint of his or her name (that is, a name day).

The custom of name day celebration, i.e. the celebration of the holiday on the occasion of the saint patron's day, comes from Catholic tradition, where the names of saints and martyrs are associated with specific days of the year. In some countries e.g. Sweden such lists are published officially. The way of celebration is usually solemn, similar in rank to birthday. However, there are religions (Protestantism), national minorities (Kashubs in Poland) or regions where a name day is not celebrated or remains completely unknown.



Diversity of cultures can be fascinating. Be open minded, understanding and have some curiosity

### OTHER EXAMPLES

- One day a light bulb burnt out in one of dormitory rooms. The foreign students who lived there called for a maintenance worker, who came quickly to solve the problem. However, his entering the room caused outrage. It turned out that he had stepped on and walked across something which was not a typical and everyday use carpet but a special prayer rug. Of course, he did not do that on purpose – it was completely unintentional. Therefore, it is recommended that one keeps their religious or valuable items in a safe place.

## 3.7. Social openness / openness of society / approach to diversity: multi-generation, disability, sexual orientation, nationalism

### SITUATION 1

A student with learning difficulties, despite the fact that he had an opportunity to consult his educator about them and obtain some support, never did so. The lecturer (a woman) encouraged him many times to use this form of help. Before the end of the semester, she asked the student to stay after class because she wanted to inform him that he probably would not get a credit. During the conversation, the student explained that due to poor language skills he did not understand the conditions for getting a credit. The lecturer asked why he never stayed after classes and why he never visited her during duty hours to clarify his doubts. The student admitted that in his culture it is not accepted for a man to speak openly about his problems, specially to a woman. A real man deals with his problems alone, which proves that he is a real man.

*Men and women are assigned different roles and tasks in society. Expectations towards men and women relate to e.g. their role in the family, type of work, interests and ways of spending free time, appearance, as well as personality traits, expressing emotions and behaviour in various situations. What is accepted in one country may arouse surprise, indignation or even be forbidden in another. It is worth remembering when one decides to study a foreign university.*

### SITUATION 2

In class, one of the students was constantly questioning what the lecturer said. When speaking, she usually referred to the latest theories, things she had just read or heard about (that week or the week before), a different research perspective, a different approach and different experiences (including her own). The lecturer thought that the student intentionally wanted to discredit him in the eyes of the group and questioned his knowledge simply because she was mean. After class, he asked her to say for a short face-to-face conversation. When asked why she was constantly questioning everything he said, the student answered with great satisfaction that she was very happy that the lecturer had noticed her substantive

contribution to academic discussions and that he appreciated her independent thinking, her own opinion and strength of argument. These were the students' traits that were most valued in her country.

*There are countries and academic cultures in which great importance is paid to shaping the self-reliance and independence of students. What is highly valued is an unconventional approach to problems, cognitive curiosity, independent exploration of issues and creativity. In other countries, universities are academic communities that primarily cultivate the "master-student" relationship based on trust, mutual respect and authority. If you find out what your university values most before you leave, you will certainly be able to adapt better on site and avoid many disappointments.*

### SITUATION 3

During an award ceremony held at a Polish university after an intercollegiate competition, the dean of the department, when handing over a diploma and flowers to a student from Sweden, bent down to kiss her hand. The student was so confused that she jerked her hand back, ran off the podium and left the hall. In the corridor, she loudly expressed her indignation to the organisers of the ceremony, claiming that nobody reacted to such an open act of harassment, and wanted them to call the police.

*In Poland there is a custom of men kissing women's hands, both in exceptional and solemn situations, as well as in everyday ones, e.g. when greeting someone. A hand kiss is to be a distinction, a sign of special respect or recognition. Savoir-vivre recommends only marking the kiss – bringing the lips 1-2 cm close to a woman's hand. It is also allowed to touch a woman's hand with lips. Kissing the woman's hand today is only acceptable in case of women that the man knows well (e.g. a grandmother, aunt, mother, sister, a very close friend) or elderly ones. Women, especially foreigners who you know less, can perceive and interpret such a kiss in a negative way. The phenomenon of men kissing women's hands has been described in numerous savoir-vivre books, not only Polish, but also German, English, French and Spanish ones. It is worth getting acquainted with this specific custom before leaving for a country where it can still be practised.*

### OTHER EXAMPLES

- A lecturer of microeconomics was always very conscientious and it was important for him that all his students understood everything what he explained in class. After each class, he would ask the students whether they understood everything and could solve tasks without any problems. They all nodded enthusiastically, which made him pleased and satisfied. To his great surprise, half of the group failed an exam. He asked his colleague about what he might have done wrong since the exam result was a big failure for him. His colleague explained to him that in Far East it is

not considered appropriate to admit that someone does not know something. That was the reason why the students nodded even though not everything was clear to them. In Europe, such behaviour is completely incomprehensible.

- A student from Poland came to a Ukrainian university to study there for one semester within the Erasmus + program. When talking to lecturers, he noticed a different form of address – a patronymic one (for instance, “Ivan Petrovich”, not “Professor”). Of course, this did not cause any difficulties in studying and passing exams. However, it is worth knowing such cultural nuances as they may facilitate communication and negotiations in the host country.
- A group of 8 students entered a dean’s office and approached an employee working there. The employee asked the students to approach him one at a time. Because the office was small, he also asked other students to wait outside, except for the one who wanted to ask about something. However, the students did not want to leave, claiming that in their country everything is done in a group. They also said that they felt better together because they could support and help each other in case of problems e.g. with communication.

**!** *In some countries, foreign language skills are very poor among many people, especially the elderly. When going to study abroad, it is worth learning a few basic words and phrases in the language of the destination country. You can avoid several stressful situations.*



*It is not only polite but also very useful to learn some words in the local language*

## 4. General Advice

### 4.1. Language Adaptation

Travelling abroad is often a much anticipated and fun experience. There is a lot of enthusiasm about visiting a new place, meeting new people, experience different cultures, broadening the horizons. However, to enjoy the time spent in a foreign country, it is important to be able to communicate with others. Not everybody might speak English, so before travelling to the host country make sure you have a degree of familiarity/basic knowledge of the language spoken there. To do so, get a mini glossary of the language, go on self-learning language websites, socialize with locals and/or ask the host university if short and intensive language courses are provided.

#### SITUATION

A British student walked in the cafeteria of the university to order lunch. However, there was too much noise, and so the person at the till replied with the word ‘tee ipate?’ The student thought she was asking him if he would like some tea with his lunch and so he answered ‘no, thank you!’ The employee looked at the student strangely as she simply said ‘what did you say?’ in Greek because she didn’t hear him properly. As a result of the miscommunication, the student was embarrassed and felt uncomfortable.

Develop a fundamental familiarity with the language of the host country. Does the host university provide this kind of service?

Clear and concise information regarding the language adaptation should be available and easily accessible on the host university’s website. This should consist of the following details:

- Information of the foreign language and preliminary study prior to arriving the host institution. Suggestions of several websites of self-learning and self-assessing language knowledge.
- A mini bilingual glossary consisting of common phrases and words to facilitate students’ first days in the foreign country.
- Short and intensive language courses should also be offered to students in person (on campus) and online free of charge or for a nominal fee.

- d. TANDEM language learning opportunities available by pairing incoming with local students, either face-to-face meetings, over the phone, via email or social media.
- e. Language learning through participation in clubs and socialising with local students (e.g. book club, football team, etc.).
- f. Language learning through attending cultural events and interacting with locals.
- g. Lectures and presentations held in local language could be another instrument for language learning.



*Knowing a few local words makes life easier*

## 4.2. Health Services

While living abroad can be exciting, accidents might happen, or you might find yourself in difficult circumstances under which emergency services may be needed. To prepare yourself for such unfortunate instances, it is important to remember that 112 is the common emergency number for European countries for all emergency services. It can be accessed from landlines and mobiles on all telecommunication networks and it is free of charge!

### SITUATION

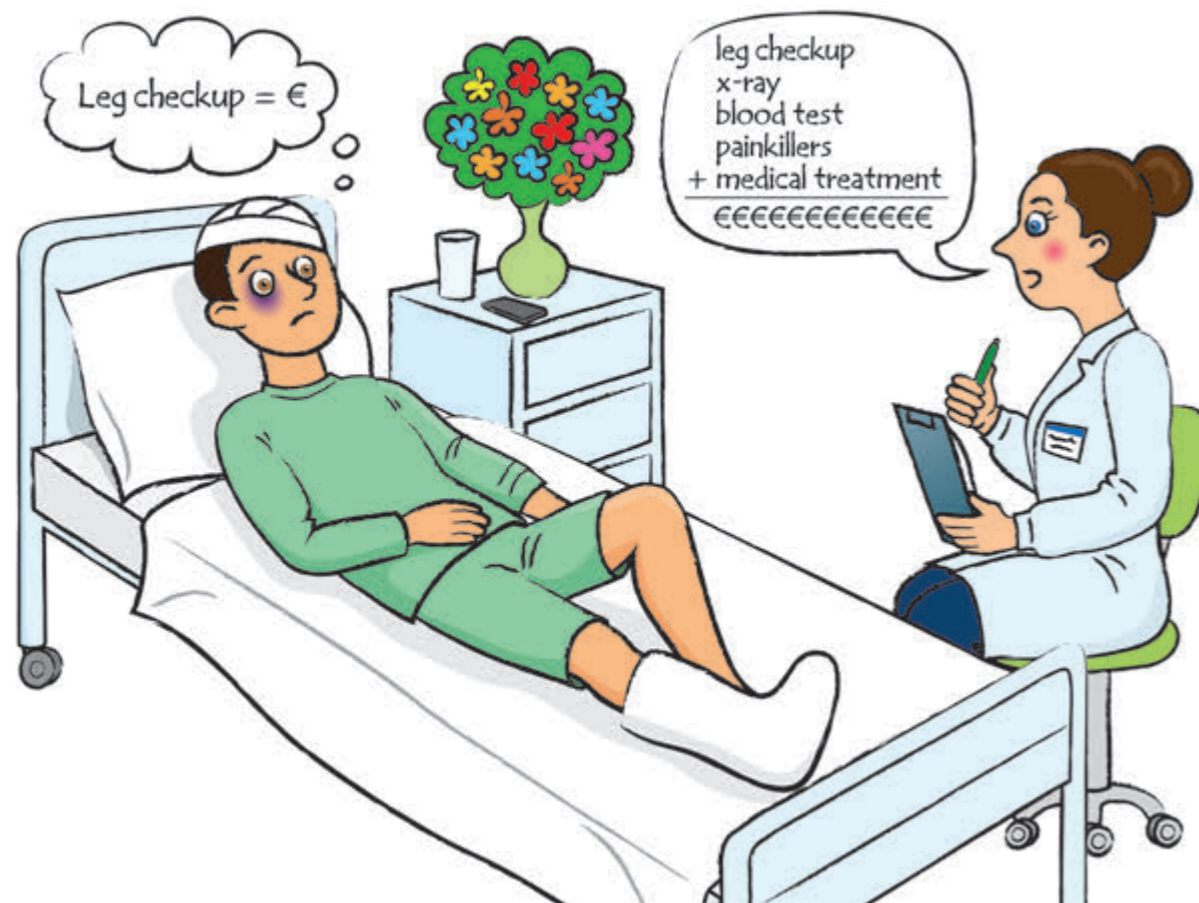
A student from Latvia decided to visit the hospital as he was feeling unwell. The doctor examined him and suggested to stay a couple of nights to keep him under observation, but the student seemed worried and wanted to leave. However, when the doctor asked him why, the student explained it was because he was not sure if he could afford to pay for the hospital fees. When the doctor explained that public health care in Greece is free of charge, the student was relieved but also embarrassed.

It is important to contact the International Student Office and find out how the health care system of the host country operates (e.g. where to go in case you need medical assistance, how to register to a GP). Remember! Be aware of your health and wallet – check your health insurance and make sure you know what it covers.

It is of great importance that such information is readily available to students on the host university's website under a section dedicated to health services. This section should contain the following information:

- a. Basic details on the health care system of the country of the host university so that the students can familiarize themselves with the way the system operates.
- b. Information about registering to GP, visits to health clinics and appointments, medicine purchases and prescriptions.
- c. Information and a short step-by-step guide on what to do in case of an emergency, who to call, where to go.
- d. Emergency numbers to services in the host country (e.g. fire department, ambulance, police)

- e. Health insurance – if provided by the university, information on what it covers. In the case where it is not applicable, a list of health insurance companies and some of the packages they offer (along with price and coverage) could be made available to the host university's website.
- f. A warning to students to avoid online unregistered pharmacies and the dangers of buying medicine online.



*Inform your doctor of your insurance and what it covers*

### 4.3. Social Media Platforms

Many universities have an online presence. Visit the university's website and find out about the institution you are interested in. Have a virtual tour if offered, explore the schools and departments, have a virtual tour of the campus and its facilities. Also, many institutions now have their own social media page (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, blog, etc.). Go online and find out information about the university you are visiting. Discover its different hubs and communities, its upcoming and past events, news of the university and even read what other students say about the university. Social media platforms give you the opportunity to take a glimpse of what is happening to the university before you get there, help you become member of a certain community and make friends too!

#### SITUATION

Just before the exam period, a lecturer posted an announcement on the university's educational learning platform that there will be revision sessions taking place. A student from Italy was not familiar with the website and its functions. He wasn't aware that teaching members of staff can leave messages for students on the website, so he was not informed and didn't attend the revision meetings. As a result, he didn't do well in his exams.

To find out information about the university's own training/educational learning platform and its functions (e.g. timetables, modules and credits, communication with teaching staff etc.) contact the programme coordinator of the host university. If you are interested in working in the host country, you should contact the Career Office.

Social media functions are significant to university and student life. Aside from the ability to assist in collecting information and enable social interaction, they also act as communication channels between peers and also between students and faculty. To this end, it is important to provide students with:

- a. Basic information about the university's own training/educational learning platform and its functions: for instance, how to enrol, sign-in, receive information about timetable, classes, exams and other important deadlines, information about modules and credits, how to communicate with lecturers and other students, search and find reading material, past exam papers, etc.
- b. Information about any university social media platforms (e.g. University's Facebook page) that students can visit and find out about cultural events, news of the university and student community, important announcements regarding the institution, etc.
- c. Other often utilized websites associated with the host university:

- student hubs and/or online club communities (i.e. poetry club) where students with similar interests may join.
- websites which promote TANDEM language learning
- websites regarding student tutorship
- websites with astonishing stories and past experiences of incoming/outgoing students
- website to student newspaper, if available online
- career and professional business networking websites
- research networking websites



*Use of various social media platforms can be very helpful.  
But don't miss to ask via which you will get the official information.  
But be aware of how you get official information*

## 4.4. Financial Matters

Whether your parents support you financially or you are self-funded, financial matters is something that will most likely occupy your mind before going to study abroad. It is important to prepare yourself so that you avoid being broke in a foreign country. Check the cost of living and transport and the prices of food, for example how many cans of beer do I get with 5 euro? Is 8 euro enough for a sandwich and a coffee? Also, find out about everyday services (e.g. how much does a haircut cost? A manicure and pedicure?) and entertainment (What about the cost of cinema tickets?) To avoid being taken by surprise, contact the International Office and get an estimate of the costs before you travel to a foreign country to study.

Keep in mind that some shops may not accept credit card payments under a certain amount of money, so it is wise to always have some cash with you. Save money by not forgetting to take advantage of your student card and the discounts it offers!  
Situation:

### SITUATION

A Spanish and a German student decided to go to the movies. When they arrived at the ticket desk the lady there informed them that students get a discount of 20%. However, the German student did not have his student card with him. He tried explaining to the lady that he is a student, but he couldn't prove it without his student card. Despite his and his friend's attempts, the lady was not convinced, and he had to pay the full price of the ticket. The student was bitter but unfortunately there was nothing he could do.

Many places offer discount for students. However, these discounts are available only with a show of a valid student ID. Do not be offended if someone insists on seeing your student ID. It is not a matter of trust but rather a standard practice! Financial matters is one of the issues that occupy students' minds quite frequently as the majority of them are usually financially dependent on their parents while others are on a student loan. For this reason, it is of great importance to provide information to students in an attempt to help them prepare and plan ahead before arriving to the host country. The following information could be listed on the host university's website:

- Cost of living, for example accommodation fees or rent and deposits (if cannot live on campus or choose to stay in a private owned property), utility bills (i.e. electricity, water, internet companies available and prices), mobile phone costs (bills, student packages offered by different companies).
- Prices of food and costs differences between supermarkets and independent local shops (greengrocer's, butcher's, bakery, etc.). Information could also be given on food and prices found in small stores selling international goods.

- c. Payment option is also a quite important issue; some shops may not accept credit card payments under a certain amount of money. Also, a warning should be made to students in order to raise awareness of scams, when making purchases never to give their card details over the phone but rather prefer safer options such as paying by cash or credit card.
- d. Students should also be informed about everyday prices such as barber, hairdresser, beautician and possible student discounts they may be entitled to. Similarly, cost of entertainment is important to them: cinema tickets, museum admissions could be briefly mentioned on the website.
- e. Other important costs for students could be transport costs, for instance bus, train, metro tickets, taxi fares, student passes and information on how to apply for one, other discounts students may be eligible for.
- f. Scholarship funds, grants and student loans, application process, eligibility criteria, etc.
- g. University fees, payment plan, payment options, etc.
- h. Banks, information on opening bank account process, documentation required, types of bank accounts, etc.
- i. Work for students, work permit if required, application process, fees, national insurance number, etc.



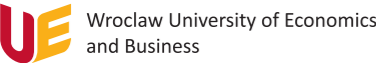
*Find out what you can afford abroad. Food prices can be different in supermarkets, independent local shops and of course in vending machines*

## Closing Paragraph

Going abroad is an exciting time. But it can also be a challenging experience. This manual has been composed in an attempt to help you and other future students with going abroad to study. As such, instructions and advices such as 'preparing yourself at home' and 'integration in a new environment', amongst others, have been included in these pages. Examples of cultural differences are illustrated throughout the manual with the form of funny cartoons in order to prepare yourself for situations you might encounter.

We hope you find this information useful. Though you might not follow this manual to the letter, we propose that you use it as a starting point for your journey. The purpose of this manual is not to deter you from choosing to study abroad. On the contrary, it aims to equip you to fully enjoy and explore this unique experience!

We wish you a wonderful time abroad!



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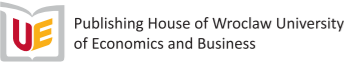
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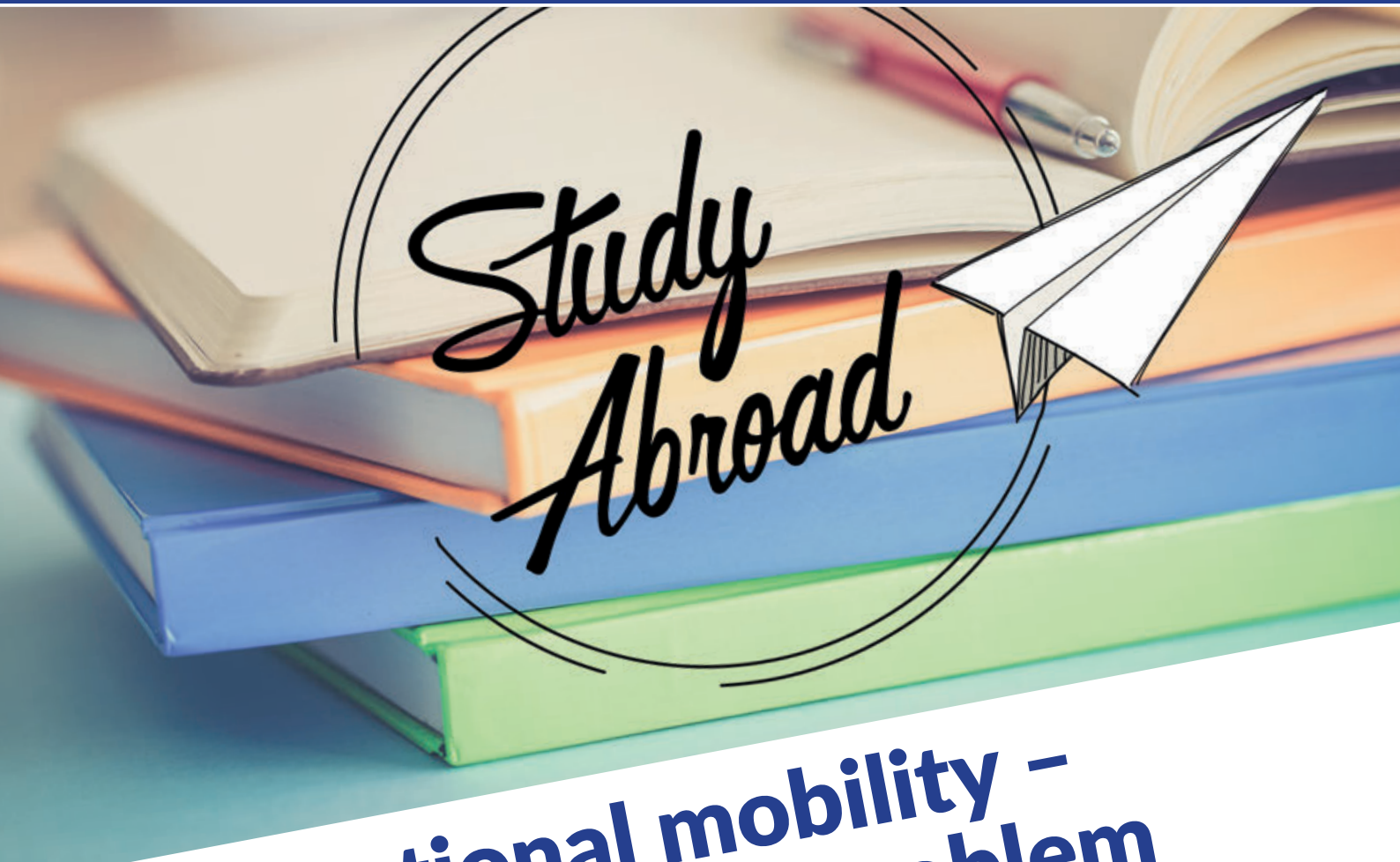
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Study  
Abroad

The graphic features the words 'Study Abroad' in a large, black, cursive script. This text is centered within a circular frame composed of two concentric black lines. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a stack of books in blue, green, and orange. A red pen lies on top of the books. A white paper airplane is illustrated in the upper right corner, pointing towards the top right. The overall theme is international education and mobility.

# International mobility - opportunity and problem

Proper preparation for studying at a foreign university