MSSU Honors Program – Study Abroad Contract

This form should be filled out as soon as possible after deciding on a study abroad plan and submitted to the Honors Director no later than 6 weeks before planned departure.

Name: ______________________ Date: __________________

SID #: ______________________

Semester and Year of Study Abroad:
Fall______ Spring______ Intersession______ Summer______

Length of Study:
____One Year_____ One Semester _____ Other (indicate length of time) __________________________

Location of Study (country, city, etc.): __________________________

Dates of Enrollment: From _ _ / _ _ / _ _ _ _ to _ _ / _ _ / _ _ _ _

Is this:
A University-sponsored trip lasting a minimum of 10 days? Yes/No

If yes, which University? __________________________________________

Faculty Sponsor _____________________________________________

An ISEP trip? Yes/No

A Bilateral Exchange? Yes/No

Other, give details _______________________________________________

School Attending (if applicable): ______________________________________

Courses planned (if any): ___________________________________________

Do you have a passport? Yes/No

Is your FAFSA on file in financial aid? Yes/No

Requested monetary support from the Institute of International Studies? Yes/No

Have you checked to see if you need immunizations or other shots? Yes/No

_______________________________________________________________

Approval by Honors Director Date
MSSU Honors Program – Study Abroad Requirement

1. Before leaving on your trip, please submit to the Honors Director a 5 page essay (double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, one-inch margins) in which you address expectations about your upcoming trip. Questions include:

   a. Why did you choose to visit this country?
   b. What do you expect out of this experience? Why?
   c. What are you expecting the people to be like? Why do you have those assumptions?
   d. What are you expecting the landscape to be like? Why?
   e. What sights or events are you most excited to see. Why?

2. Start a blog (WordPress, Blogger, etc). While on your trip, compose short responses every few days about your study abroad experience. Post these short responses, as well as any pictures, on your blog. Please remember to send the link to your blog to the Honors Director before you leave for your trip.

   Here are some questions to address during your trip that will help you to consider and process your study abroad experience:

   a. In what ways is this culture similar and different from your own?
   b. Describe a person you’ve encountered from the place you are visiting. It could be a friend or a complete stranger, perhaps someone you’ve never even spoken to. Discuss how this person is typical of the people normally associated with this culture. It might be the way this person speaks, dresses, acts, etc.
   c. What has shocked you the most? Why?
   d. Give advice to other students planning to study where you are. What do you wish that someone had told you? What pre-travel steps should be taken? Are there customs or mannerisms that one should know prior to departure?
   e. Choose a museum, gallery, historical landmark, etc. to visit and explain how it has contributed to your understanding of the country’s history, identity or culture.

3. Within two weeks of returning home, please submit to the Honors Director another 5 page essay (double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, one-inch margins) in which you discuss your overall thoughts and opinions on the country you visited. Questions include:

   a. Was this experience what you expected? Why or why not?
   b. How has this experienced changed you?
   c. How have cultural differences made you more aware of your own culture, of its benefits, limitations, strengths, or biases?
   d. In what ways might your own culture/society benefit by learning from others?
   e. How will this experience affect your future, whether in academic, social, career, or personal choices?
Study Abroad – What You Need to Know
Tips gathered online (Google “study abroad tips) and from previous Honors students.

Preparation:
1. Read up about your study abroad destination. You'll regret it if you don't. Pick up a travel book, like a Lonely Planet, to get to know the culture, history, major monuments, transportation, local sites, as well as the good and bad areas of town. You will know more about what you are seeing, and what to see. Check travel.state.gov to be sure there are no travel warnings to your destination.
2. With astute planning, anyone can afford to study abroad. To economize, study in a country where the U.S. dollar is especially strong and/or study on a student exchange (ISEP or partner school) or for a shorter duration.
3. Try to learn a few handy local phrases of the local language. The more you know of the language, the better you'll adjust.
4. Students always say, “Bring fewer clothes and more money!” Even if you have to take out a loan, don't miss the chance to enjoy doing what you want to do on the trip. For a short trip, I would pack so that everything I needed was in the one roll-on bag and one personal item.

What NOT to Pack:
1. Anything you would kick yourself for losing; that expensive watch, the Tiffany's locket your dad bought you for your birthday, unnecessary credit cards, wads of cash, your Social Security card, and any other valuables.
2. Anything that would be considered a weapon. Even a pocketknife can result in a serious weapons charge while on foreign soil – even if the knife is found during a search or arrest for an unrelated offense.
3. Toiletries and amenities that may already be available at your destination. If you bring only travel-sized toiletries, you'll have less to carry around, plus room for any presents that you bring home! Any liquids you plan to carry onto a plane must be in 3-oz bottles (or smaller) and all of them must fit into one quart-sized Ziploc bag.
4. Big purses or messenger bags. These are like wearing a neon sign that says, "Rob me!" Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe, in inside pockets, a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest, or in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

What you SHOULD Bring:
1. Make two photocopies of your passport identification page; put one in luggage separately from your passport and leave one with someone at home. Also, leave copies of airline tickets, driver's license, the credit cards you're taking, insurance information, as well as the addresses and phone numbers of the places you'll be with someone at home.
2. Take pictures of family and friends (not just on your phone) that you can look at whenever you get homesick. It will happen occasionally and having pictures to look at will help it pass.
3. Record the address and telephone numbers of the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, and keep this information with you at all times.
4. Many other countries use 220-volt electricity while U.S. appliances use 110-volt electricity. Get a travel adapter (a "transformer" and “plug adapters”) before you go. (Target has these)
5. Pack an extra outfit in your carry-on just in case your luggage is lost, or if you are separated from your travel gear.
6. Bring a back-up supply of any medications you need in case you are delayed during your trip. Keep it on you when you travel in case you and your luggage get separated. All prescriptions should be clearly marked in their original containers. A small first-aid kit, sunscreen, and pain relievers may come in handy.
7. Pack appropriate clothes. Find out what the weather conditions and dress expectations are for your destination, and pack accordingly.

8. Make sure your luggage is labeled with your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage.

9. Bring an international calling card to make phone calls. Your phone will work if it is GSM (AT&T), but call to make sure it is activated for international use and to check prices. Or, purchase a prepaid phone when you arrive.

10. Find out if internet connections/Skype are available where you are going. Online access lets you contact family and friends via email, and keep informed of events back home via the Web. Take a laptop with a webcam if you think you will have time to make use of it. All this will help reduce culture shock and home sickness.

Tips:
1. Get some money in the foreign currency before you travel.
2. Tell your bank that you will be traveling abroad, and for how long, so your ATM/credit cards will work overseas.
3. Take pictures! Most students regret not having taken more pictures. And so you don’t forget what you took pictures of, rename your digital images with descriptive titles.
4. Buy weekly/monthly subway/bus passes and museum passes; they save money and there is often a student discount.
5. Take your student ID to get discounts. There is also an International Student ID Card (ISIC) available for $22. You can often use it to get foreign currency at the airport commission free.
6. If you pack a large suitcase, stick a smaller bag inside to pack for any weekend trips.
7. Look up information about the airports you’ll visit before you go so you can find your way around.
8. Pack lightly, especially if you are moving around a lot; carrying heavy luggage all over the place gets old fast.
9. Don’t pack your suitcase all the way full. Leave room for any souvenirs.
10. Take snacks, especially if there is something you cannot live without. Not all cultures believe in having snacks, and you might not like what is available there. One jar of peanut butter can go a long way.
11. Do something different! Many who go abroad are happy to spend time with other Americans, party until all hours of the night at different bars and dance clubs, and speak in English for the duration of the trip. Get out of your comfort zone, whether it is eating strange foods, studying in the local language, living in a homestay with a local family, joining a local club or sports team, volunteering or finding an internship locally, or simply getting off the beaten path when you travel. Not only will you get a better flavor of the cultural nuances and how things work in the country you are living in, but you will be more resilient and gain a different view of the country you are in.
12. Try to integrate into the culture! Connect with the locals as much as you can, even if this means leaving some of your travel mates on occasion, and don’t be afraid to act like a local. You will always be an American, but it is worth reading up and respecting the history of the country and people you are living with. Take behavioral cues from locals, especially in regards to dressing more conservatively in churches and the local tolerance for public drinking. Know what is an appropriate tip when at a restaurant and for a cab ride.

References and Other Resources:
http://www.collegeanswer.com/selecting/content/sel_abd_tips.jsp
http://www.gearfire.net/10-study-tips-suggestions/
studentsabroad.state.gov
glimpse.org
transitionsabroad.com
RateYourStudyAbroad.com
Abroadview.org