



PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION GUIDE for PROGRAM LEADERS

Pre-departure orientation is an essential component of every education abroad program and helps to ensure that students and program leaders are well-prepared and empowered to establish expectations and manage health and safety while abroad.

This document is intended to serve as a template from which program leaders can build a customized pre-departure orientation tailored to the program destination and details. In addition to a program-specific orientation, which may take place over several meetings or class times, the Office of Global Opportunities (OSU GO) also provides pre-departure orientation content that covers important, yet general, information applicable to all students, regardless of destination or program content. Below is a summary of the pre-departure student orientation components that should take place prior to a program’s departure.

STUDENT PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION COMPONENTS

TYPE	DELIVERY MECHANISM	TOPICS COVERED
Program-specific In-person Pre-departure Orientations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and led by the Program Leaders Ideally, involve three or more 2-hour sessions or are integrated into a pre-departure course (1 or more credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic, social, and practical information about the program Host country information, culture, and considerations Preparations for departure Completion of paperwork, if needed
OSU GO In-person Pre-departure Orientation <i>(ideally concurrent with one of the orientations above)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSU GO will coordinate with each Program Leader to deliver an OSU GO presentation as part of your program-specific orientation Generally 30-45 minutes in length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & safety while abroad International accident & sickness insurance Course registration, billing, etc. Resources re: diversity & inclusion in study abroad Cultural learning Student conduct/behavior while abroad
OSU GO PORTAL Pre-departure Assessment Quiz <i>(this can be completed at any time)</i>	OSU GO Portal includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learning content questionnaires signature documents assessment quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Medical Passport and Flight Information Health Disclosure Communication Plans Participant Cost Sheet Financial Responsibilities Student Conduct and Behavior Abroad Review of key policies and processes

Please utilize the following guide as you develop your pre-departure orientation.

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION TOPICS

PROGRAM OVERVIEW & ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Review dates (arrival date, on-site orientation, first day of class, and departure date).
- ✓ Preview a typical daily schedule (designated class times, free time, etc.) and the schedule for field trips and travel.
- ✓ Discuss required class materials (e.g. books, notebooks, laptop, camera, etc.).
- ✓ Explain what students should expect related to workload, travel, group work, learning outcomes, etc.
- ✓ Discuss in detail your expectations of students related to grading and evaluation, including non-traditional coursework. Make sure students understand expectations and how grades will be determined.
- ✓ Establish the expectation that students are to participate in every required activity and class session scheduled during the program. Attending class and program activities is not optional.
- ✓ Consider creating opportunities and time for student reflection as part of the course curriculum.
- ✓ Plan time for (and encourage) reflection and feedback between you and the students from the start of the program, so students can discuss and process the things they are experiencing throughout the program. You may want to check in with students frequently throughout the program and in one-on-one sessions if feasible.
- ✓ Discuss what it will be like to live and travel as a large group. Address apprehensions about privacy, personal time, etc. Students will need to share, cooperate, sometimes sacrifice individual needs, and look after the group.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

- ✓ Encourage students to allow adequate time to [apply for \(or renew\) and receive their passports](#). Most countries require that a traveler's passport be valid for at least six months beyond the dates of their trip.
- ✓ [Check all entry requirements for your destination](#)(s). Some countries require visas. Students are responsible for having all necessary travel documents or visas for the program. OSU GO can offer limited guidance and verification letters, if needed.
- ✓ Non-U.S. citizens participating in your program may have different entry requirements. These students need to check with the destination consulate/embassy to verify what additional documents (if any) they need for entry/travel in the host country. Please refer to OSU GO's "[Education Abroad and International Students](#)".
- ✓ Review the [U.S. State Department's Tips for Traveling Abroad](#) for additional resources.

FLIGHTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

- ✓ Once your 'committed' student cohort meets the minimum enrollment requirement and/or is officially approved to move forward, proactively inform your students about the details of your meeting location. Identify specific airports (not just a major city) and time frame and whether students can opt to fly with a Program Leader (especially for first time travelers).
- ✓ Through OSU GO's online portal, students will enter their flight itinerary information. You or your OSU GO Coordinator can help create a spreadsheet report from these compiled entries for easy reference.
- ✓ Determine a meeting place for students at the start of the program. This may be en route to the final destination, group housing, classroom site, etc. Make sure students have clear directions (in English and the local language).

- ✓ Make sure students have on-site contact information and a back-up plan. The Program Leader should be available and easy to contact prior to students' designated arrival (unless traveling with students).
- ✓ Set clear guidelines ahead of time for what students should do if they do not arrive at the initial meeting place as planned. Address how to access money and any logistical considerations related to traveling to the meeting point.

CLOTHING, HOUSING, FOOD, AND TRANSPORTATION

- ✓ Address in-country weather conditions and suggest items to pack. Discuss appropriate attire, both with regard to climate and cultural expectations.
- ✓ Provide information about housing arrangements, regulations, etc.
- ✓ Establish clear expectations for students regarding housing, policies, property damage, etc.
- ✓ Discuss specific cultural norms and practical issues related to home stays, if applicable. Address concerns and encourage dialogue if problems arise on site.
- ✓ Discuss dining and food options, costs, local customs, and any food risks.
- ✓ Discuss local drug and alcohol laws and culture, as well as risks associated with excessive drinking.
- ✓ Discuss the availability and use of local transportation. Point out which modes of transportation are preferred, general costs, and how to purchase tickets.
- ✓ Discuss potentially unsafe transportation methods that are not recommended (e.g. hitchhiking, motorcycles, etc.)
- ✓ Explain living and traveling conditions with as much detail as possible to avoid "surprises" and student concerns.

COMMUNICATION, BANKING, AND MONEY

- ✓ Discuss access to mail, internet, and phone.
- ✓ Encourage students to set communication frequency expectations with family and friends before they leave.
- ✓ Laptops and cell phones: to bring or not to bring? Discuss in relation to coursework, security, and practicality.
- ✓ Explain options for accessing money on-site (e.g. ATMs, banks, exchange rates, cash, credit cards). Help students plan how much money of their own they will need during the program.
- ✓ Consider procedures for financial emergencies. Remind students of what they are responsible for (personal spending, health/medical care, food, shopping, communications, etc.).
- ✓ Encourage students to notify their bank, credit card company, and cell provider of their travel plans.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, MEDICAL CARE, AND INSURANCE

- ✓ Remind students that international travel is inherently physically, psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually challenging, demanding, and stressful. Students with pre-existing physical and mental health issues may face additional challenges in a new environment.
- ✓ Describe the types of support your students can expect during the program and how that may differ from the support available to them at home.
- ✓ Make students aware of country and/or site specific health concerns and possible risks/exposure. Provide resources for information, but avoid dispensing specific medical advice. Outline local medical facilities and patient care norms in the host country.
- ✓ Review applicants' requests for accommodation of disability or medical concerns while abroad and meet with students individually to discuss any plans or preparation that may be needed.
- ✓ Encourage students to discuss their study abroad plans with on-campus support services (e.g. Disability Access Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Student Health Services) several weeks prior to departure to identify ways to manage concerns or needs while away from the campus.

- ✓ Encourage students to inform you of any concerns they have as they may not have entered information into their application initially, and now recognize its importance for themselves or the group.
- ✓ Guide students to take charge of their own health while abroad. For routine medical issues, students should visit the nearest and most reliable medical facility for treatment. Leaders should help ill students, but need not be fully responsible for basic health maintenance.
- ✓ The Travel Clinic at OSU Student Health Services is a great resource for students traveling abroad. The center offers pre-travel counseling, advice on prescriptions, vaccinations (fee-for-service), etc. Vaccinations may be necessary for travel to certain locations and a health professional is the best person to give recommendations. Discuss with your students that certain medications may not be legal and/or limited to a certain amount. It is the student's responsibility to determine this prior to the trip. Additional international health information can be obtained at the [CDC website](#).
- ✓ Inform students that OSU GO will automatically enroll all student participants in an international accident and sickness insurance plan. Policy information will be embedded in the student's online portal. Program Leaders will also be covered by the same insurance plan and will receive instructions about registering through OSU GO's Travel Registry (as an employee).

EMERGENCY PLANNING

- ✓ Provide your students with the appropriate local contact information and encourage your students to carry the wallet-sized Emergency Contact card (provided by OSU GO) with them at all times. Consider making this information available on your course website or other places that will make it readily accessible.
- ✓ Inform students of the local emergency number (*not 911*) and remind them of the 24-hour emergency assistance services → Refer to the Emergency Contact Card
- ✓ Review what to do, where to go, and who to contact in case of emergency. Make sure your students know how to get a hold of program leaders and other key local contacts.
- ✓ Ask students to make you aware of their personal medical/health considerations so that you can help facilitate appropriate care as needed. If you have concerns prior to departure about a student's health or condition, be sure to consult with the relevant on-campus support services (e.g. Counseling and Psychological Service) and OSU GO before you go abroad.

CULTURAL BEHAVIOR

- ✓ Remind students of their important role as ambassadors of OSU and the U.S. while abroad. Discuss what it means to be a student/traveler in an international context (i.e., cultural norms and traditions, gender roles, communication styles, etc. of host country).
- ✓ Remind students that cultural adaptation is a normal part of many students' experience abroad. Discuss this with them, and help to normalize the feelings that students may encounter. Mention common aspects of cultural adaptation (honeymoon, culture shock, recovery, and adjustment) and let students know they can and should come to you if they are having trouble at any time during the program.
- ✓ Discuss expectations of mindful travel, the learner, the role of reflective thinking, and the importance of respectful behavior when entering another community.
 - Taking photos - when is it appropriate?
 - Observing without judgment
 - Putting the host country in context

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Explain what the roles of the program leader, staff, and local coordinator are and are not.
- ✓ Discuss expectations (yours and your students') for living, studying, traveling, and functioning as individuals and as a group. Consider creating a group 'code of conduct' for the program. This can facilitate discussion and be a tool you can refer to if behavioral issues arise.
- ✓ Remind students that they are bound by the OSU Student Code of Conduct at all times during the program.
- ✓ Discuss with students how you will handle behavioral and disciplinary issues during the program.
- ✓ Set the expectation that students will look out for one another.
- ✓ Discuss local laws (which may be very different from U.S. state or federal laws) concerning drug and alcohol use, political activism, and other risky behavior, etc.

COMMUNITY & PERSONAL SAFETY

- ✓ Both during pre-departure and upon arrival in country (first day), discuss country-specific safety concerns in as much detail as possible, ideally, with input from local experts.
- ✓ Common gender roles, customs, and any specific safety concerns for women.
- ✓ Political and social issues, including local attitudes towards visitors/foreigners.
- ✓ Common crimes, tricks used to dupe visitors/foreigners.

NON-PROGRAM-RELATED PERSONAL TRAVEL

- ✓ Discuss non-program-related travel: When is it okay and when is it not okay? Are there destinations students should avoid?
- ✓ Set the expectation that students must inform the program leader of travel plans, and if possible, leave a contact addresses and/or phone numbers for use in emergency situations. Communicate your limited ability to assist students if they encounter difficulties off-site.
- ✓ Remind students to have their emergency contacts and insurance information with them at all times.

If you have suggestions for other topics that should be covered and/or added to the above list, please contact us in OSU GO – Faculty-led Programs Team.
