Suggested Contents for a Pre-Departure Orientation Program

Give all students the address of the UGA Office of International Education’s Pre-Departure Web Site: http://international.uga.edu/education_abroad/pre_departure_planning/ & Pre-Departure OIE “Study Abroad Passport Orientation Packet” http://international.uga.edu/all_forms_and_documents/

**Introductions of Program Director; faculty; TA’s, staff**
- Housekeeping issues (missing documents, etc.)
- Trip itinerary and changes to courses or trip itinerary
- Program director’s role and availability while abroad
- Contact information for program director while abroad

**Before You Go**
- Passports
- Visas
- Customs and V.A.T.
- International Student ID (ISIC) Card and its benefits (available through OIE)
- International travel arrangements; ticket distribution
- Taking money abroad (credit cards, debit cards, wire transfers; changing money before departure)
- Cost of extras, how much students should bring; budgeting
- Packing (baggage and weight allowances, types of suitcases, what to bring; where to carry valuables; toiletries or feminine hygiene products not available abroad)
- Making copies of documents (storing one set at home; one set apart from documents)
- Power of attorney
- Financial aid information
- Shipping items overseas
- Different electrical sockets and voltages; converters
- Weather at destination
- Pre-departure medical and dental check-ups; UGA Travel Clinic

**Once You Arrive (some topics also appropriate for on-site orientations)**
- Jetlag
- Arrival/airport transfer information
- Accommodations information (homestay, hotels, residence halls etc.)
- Laundry
- Local transportation; city maps or guides
- Location of classes; university facilities
- Group excursions
- Calling home from abroad; phone cards; Skype
- Opening a bank account abroad (if applicable)
- Changing money abroad
- Mail
- E-mail and internet access
- Local newspapers
Food; manners; which meals are covered in program cost

Metric conversions

**Medical Issues**
- General medical care
- Dental care
- Mental health care
- Pharmacies
- Availability of over-the-counter drugs
- Differences in quality or nature of health care
- Explanation of health insurance policy
- Making health care payments; how to get reimbursement for expenses
- Bringing prescription drugs for duration of trip in original containers; bringing generic prescriptions for drugs to be purchased abroad
- Bringing extra glasses, contacts, contact lens solution
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Health problems common to destination (e.g., malaria, diarrhea) and prevention
- Drinking water and eating certain foods abroad – what to avoid
- Mosquitoes and other pests; sunburn
- Recommended and required immunizations
- Serious pre-existing conditions – medical alerts bracelets/necklaces; discussing conditions with director and faculty before departure
- Disclosure of disabilities before departure if accommodations desired
- First aid kits

**Safety and Legal Information – full disclosure of known risks**
- Airport safety regulations
- Disclosure of information on crime common to area or any known incident that has occurred in past sessions
- High crime areas to avoid
- Gender/diversity issues
- Safety risks at night
- Overindulgence with alcohol as a safety risk
- Health risks/diseases specific to area
- Swimming hazards
- Road hazards; driving
- Threat of terrorism or civil unrest
- Strikes
- State department Country Specific Information sheets and travel warnings
- Dangers caused by language barriers
- How students can protect themselves (safe handling of money, purses, wallets, backpacks, jewelry; use of money belts or neck pouches; less conspicuous dress and behavior; use of maps; hitchhiking; storing valuables in hotels)
- Legal matters (arrests, drug laws, etc.)
- Information on U.S. consulates and embassies
- Responsibilities of participants
Emergency Information

- What to do in an emergency
- 911 equivalent numbers
- Address, phone number of English-speaking physician
- Address, phone of hospital
- Insurance company emergency and general assistance numbers
- Program director phone number, fax, address, e-mail
- Home campus emergency contact information
- Loss of passport
- Separation from group

Review and signing of student agreement and waiver

- Review of program rules and policies
- UGA student code of conduct application abroad
- Sanctions for violations of policies
- Drug and alcohol policy
- Policies relating to motor vehicle operation and/or insurance
- Review of contents of student agreement and waiver
- Signature of student agreement and waiver

Academic and UGA issues

- Course registration
- Adding/dropping courses
- Registering for following semester courses at UGA while abroad, bringing appropriate e-mail addresses and phone numbers
- Transfer of credit and transcripts for non-UGA students
- Financial Aid
- Books and materials for courses
- Registering for parking while abroad (having access to Arches e-mail)
- Differences in educational systems; teaching styles (for programs in foreign universities or with foreign faculty)

Cultural adjustment

- What it means to be an “American”
- How other cultures perceive “Americans”
- How to handle anti-American criticism
- Homesickness
- Culture shock
- Cultural differences (male/female relationships; personal space; privacy; formality; gifts; time; taboos)
- Religion (differences; taboos; locating religious services abroad)
- Diversity issues (lesbian/gay issues; minority students abroad)
- Regional issues (dialects; regional tensions; political issues, etc.)
Intercultural communications
Facilitating adjustment
Keeping a journal
How to meet people from host culture (clubs, organizations, families, places of worship, sports)
Materials for cultural or language preparation (books, articles, films, music)

Personal Travel
- Rail passes
- Youth hostel card
- Other modes of transportation
- Dangers and responsibilities of participants during personal travel
- Recommended travel guides (Let’s Go, Lonely Planet)

Advice from past participants
- Anecdotes
- How much money to bring
- Cultural adjustment
- Learning the language
- Other recommendations

Re-entry
- Change and adaptation
- Skills, attitudes and knowledge acquired
- Loss of status
- Changes in family relationships and friends
- Integration back into university/college life