

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE



STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK

About This Handbook

This handbook is prepared for NIC students enrolled in any Study Abroad activity. It contains general information pertinent to students on all NIC outbound mobility programs.

The handbook is separated into 6 sections addressing administrative and academic guidelines, health and safety concerns, and general preparation issues associated with study abroad activities.

Outbound mobility programs could be defined as follows:

- Exchange Programs: Short and long-term independent study abroad options at partners institutions around the world. NIC selects and prepare students for the outbound mobility program; international partner arranges for housing, classes, health and safety, and all administrative aspects while abroad.
- Field Schools: Structured, short-term international study opportunities, led by NIC instructors. These are group activities. NIC selects and prepare students for the outbound mobility program and, in consultation with the international partner, arranges the itinerary, international and local transportation, accommodation, and administration of the field school while abroad.
- International Practicum/Internships: Structure short and/or long-term opportunities to complete international internship, independent study, volunteering, practicum or clerkship for credit or not for credit. NIC selects and prepare students for the outbound mobility program, but the arrangements for the international and local transportation, accommodation, and administration of the program while abroad could be either shared responsibility or arranged by a third-party program provider and/or by the host institution. These could be independent or group activities.

The information in this handbook is relevant to most outbound mobilities. However, each outbound mobility program is different and will have its own specifics.

For any questions or more information, please visit the Office of Global Engagement!

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Roles & Responsibilities

North Island College and all study abroad (SA) participants have a shared responsibility to promote the preparedness and well-being of all study abroad participants.

North Island College

The Office of Global Engagement (OGE) plays a primary role in supporting study abroad participants. Specifically, the Office of Global Engagement is responsible for:

- Ensuring each participant is aware of their responsibilities during their study abroad experience;
- Providing advice, expertise, and resources through risk assessment and planning processes;
- Coordinating the training and education of NIC Study Abroad participants and Field School Leaders regarding risk assessment, emergency planning, and travel preparations;
- Investigating and documenting health and safety concerns and incidents;
- Communicating safety abroad information and expectations to international partners and host organizations; and
- Administering the forms, documentation, and recordkeeping as required for all study abroad programs.

Field School Leaders

(not normally required for exchange)

The Field School Leader is designated by NIC to lead the study abroad experience. The Field School leader is responsible for:

- Working with OGE to prepare the itinerary, logistics, and risk management procedures for the study abroad activity;
- Acting as institutional liaison between OGE and the host partner while abroad;
- Understanding and complying with all relevant components of the safety and communications guidelines developed and approved by OGE/NIC Risk Management Committee that can be applied to the activity;
- Working with OGE and host partners (as appropriate) to deliver pre-departure orientation sessions and activity briefing sessions;

- Conducting ongoing risk assessment and resolving any safety concerns during the delivery of the study abroad program to the best of their ability;
- Collaborating with OGE to ensure the appropriate screening and selection of eligible participants for the study abroad activity;
- Following established reporting protocols for any safety or health incidents or concerns;
- Collecting and reporting feedback and evaluation from all participants; and,
- Completing a final report and assessment of the study abroad/field school activity to be submitted to OGE and supervisor.

Study Abroad Student Participants

SA participants are defined as individuals, including NIC students, staff, faculty, and community members, taking part in a study abroad activity endorsed by NIC. Each individual participant is responsible for:

- Demonstrating understanding and complying with all relevant components of the safety protocols;
- Bringing to the attention of the Field School Leader, OGE representative, and international host partner of any special needs requiring accommodations in writing by the required deadline;
- Submitting all required documentation, waivers, payments, and forms to OGE by the deadlines specified;
- Participating in all required pre-departure training, preparation, and activities;
- Providing copies of all documents required for travel, such as passport, country specific entry documents, etc. to OGE by the required deadline;
- Obtaining vaccination/immunization and medical advice as recommended by public health officers and/ or Government of Canada;
- Providing OGE with evidence of appropriate personal travel/medical insurance;
- Acting safely and in a responsible manner and exercising good judgement at all times to prevent harm to themselves and to others; and
- Communicating any concerns related to safety or hazards; reporting safety incidents and/or near misses to the OGE representative, SA Field School Leader, and/or international host partner.

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Participant Code of Conduct

Depending on the Study Abroad activity, the Dean and Registrar, with the support of the Manager of IPPGE and the Institutional Risk Committee (when appropriate), will consider breaches of conduct that may be brought to their attention from program leader(s), other participants and/or the host institution representative as appropriate.

North Island College reserves the right to withdraw any participant from the Study Abroad program at any time if the participant does not comply with:

- Program procedures and requirements;
- Completion and submission of the required documents by deadlines;
- · Making required payments;
- Attending the required pre-departure sessions and activities;
- Following the participant code of conduct while abroad as required by the SA program;
- Contravening any of NIC's policies and procedures; and/or
- Demonstrating behavior that threatens to damage the relationship between NIC and the host partner, or NIC's reputation.

If a participant is withdrawn, they must leave the program immediately. The balance of funds paid for participation in the Study Abroad program will not normally be refunded. There will be no refund of tuition or other academic or administrative fees. The affected participant is then personally responsible for all costs incurred as a result of early departure.

Travel, Health & Medical Insurance

Insurance Information

It is the responsibility of the participant to purchase appropriate health and travel insurance for their study abroad program. Trip cancellation/interruption travel insurance is different from travel health insurance and is also highly recommended.

Participants will demonstrate that they have appropriate insurance coverage by completing the Confirmation of Health and Travel Insurance form which outlines industry standards of the minimum health and travel insurance required by the OGE with the application package. This

application along with copies of documentation providing proof of coverage needs to be completed and returned to OGE PRIOR to departure. North Island College reserves the right to terminate a participant's study abroad program should they fail to show evidence of international health insurance prior to departure.

Provincial Medical/Health Coverage

Provincial health care coverage covers only a portion of medical costs while abroad and, therefore, provides insufficient coverage for individuals traveling abroad. It is absolutely necessary to obtain private coverage as noted above for the full duration of the trip including additional personal travel time.

Canadian supplementary health insurance plans normally require coverage by a provincial government health plan (ex: BC MSP) as a basic requirement. Not having basic coverage under a provincial health insurance plan, normally results in not being eligible for a supplementary private travel health plan. It is the participant's responsibility to ensure that they are covered by a provincial government health plan AND have supplementary private health insurance that covers international travel.

Emergency/Medical Travel Insurance

Generally, NIC's students/faculty/staff have access to a level of coverage through NIC's health plan (Manulife/GreenShield/ GuardMe), or parents' / spouse's /partner's insurance plans. Many employers provide health care coverage for family members and sometimes this includes international travel coverage for free or at a reduced premium.

There are a variety of insurance products available for purchase, but this must be arranged and presented to OGE PRIOR to departure as part of the Confirmation of Health and Travel Insurance form completion.

Health & Medical Services While Abroad

 In some rural or urban areas in many parts of the world there may be less availability of quality medical services. OGE and the Study Abroad Leader will provide as much information as possible on access to health care in the town/city/region/country that the activity is taking place as part of the pre-departure information sessions.

- It is not recommended to travel with marijuana –
 whether for medical or recreational purposes as it
 is still considered an illicit drug in many parts of the
 world and travelling across borders with it (even trace
 amounts) in your possession could result in severe legal
 consequences.
- Be aware that some over-the counter drugs may vary or may not be available in the host country.
- Be cautious of health practices and herbal/narcotic drugs you are not familiar with.
- Don't travel with or bring back any unlabeled medication or narcotics.
- Be aware that many countries cannot afford new medical equipment, such as needles and syringes. You may be exposed to contaminated needles in doctor's visits, body piercing, acupuncture, tattoos, and dental work. Ask to see how the equipment is sterilized or travel with your own disposable syringes.
- Be aware that mental health is treated in different ways around the world.

Staying Healthy

While abroad study abroad participants may be exposed to a variety of viruses, bacteria, and illnesses that their bodies have had little opportunity to develop immunity against. It is important they are aware and take special care to get adequate sleep, water, nutritious food, and exercise to keep their immune systems healthy.

Also, it important to consider the following:

- Prevent insect bites by using insect repellent, long clothing, and mosquito netting;
- Report any suspicious animal bites or scratches to a doctor IMMEDIATELY;
- · Wash hands regularly;
- Avoid HIV and viral hepatitis infections by not sharing needles for tattoos body piercing, or injections;
- Prevent fungal and parasitic infections by keeping feet clean and dry and do not go bare foot;
- It is recommended that you drink only bottled water in many locations and care is recommended in eating uncooked meat or vegetables unless you are certain of how they were prepared or cleaned i.e: cleaned using filtered water or ice made with filtered water;
- Report incidents, accidents or concerns to the Study Abroad Leader or international host partner. We trust

participants to be the eyes and ears on the ground and to communicate any hazards to themselves or other participants.

Before you go

Preparing for International Travel

Set your goals

International travel and studying in a different culture are amazing privileges and increasingly an important part of education. Now that you have made the decision to study away from home; to explore different ways of knowing and being, it's time to set some goals.

Take a few minutes and think about why you are doing this? What do you want to get out of it? What do you want to learn? Or see? Or do? while you are away. Can you imagine how you might be different upon your return?

It's a great time now to set up your travel journal - electronically or buy a small paper journal. Jot down your goals in your journal as a way to open the door to this new adventure. Revisit your goals as you prepare for your study abroad and feel free to modify them as you learn more. That is the beginning of the changes coming!

A. Approximately four months prior to departure

- Your passport must be valid for 6 months after your return date. Confirm this or apply for a passport;
- For any Field School, OGE will arrange all travel logistics and book the flights;
- For exchange students, OGE will provide support with travel arrangements and with flight booking; cancellation and medical insurance are mandatory.
- If you are participating in an exchange program, discuss with your faculty advisor your course load while away and upon your return. You might want to consider your graduation timeline as well as any unique learning opportunities available while you are away;
- · Begin your research into your host country;
- Monitor any travel advisories for your host country on Travel Advices and Advisories from Government of Canada website https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories

B. Approximately two months prior to departure

- Complete your OGE required documentation as noted on the Study Abroad website;
- · Purchase travel insurance if you do not already have it;
- Meet with your doctor and update any prescriptions purchasing the amount you will need for your full time away;
- Attend the travel clinic arranged by OGE for group travel or book an appointment with the local Travel Clinic for health advice and vaccines required or recommended. All students travelling are expected to attend a travel clinic;
- OGE will provide support with visa application for any visas you will need to enter your host country and other countries you are planning to travel in. For students on exchange contact your host institution for assistance with documentation and process;
- Research and read travel guides for the countries in which you will be travelling;
- If applicable, arrange with NISU to get your International Student Identity Card. It will be useful in getting discounts while you are travelling.

C. Approximately one month prior to departure

- Attend all appropriate pre-departure orientations.
- Arrange any in-country travel that allows for discounts if purchased prior to arrival (e.g. Japan Rail passes can only be purchased outside Japan).
- Follow the checklist in Money Matters- especially be sure you have at least one credit card as a backup in case of emergency;
- Make your own packing list and do a first run through;
- · Consider travelling GREEN.

D. One week prior to departure

- Check in with OGE to ensure everything is in order. For students travelling independently receive a copy of your Emergency Protocol sheet;
- Register with Registration of Canadian's Abroad (ROCA);
- Confirm your airline and arrival arrangements; Check in with GAC Travel Advice and Advisories https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories – anything new?

Safety & Emergency Planning

The responsibility for YOUR safety and well-being while abroad does NOT rest primarily with North Island College.

While the College considers safety to be the first priority for all participants, it is impossible to predict all possible safety concerns or control all hazards in any study abroad program. Having an enjoyable study abroad experience includes learning how to travel responsibly, use common sense in all situations, and be aware of your surroundings.

Participants must take responsibility for themselves by reading all information, attending all pre-departure orientations, asking questions, seeking clarification, conducting their own research, adhering to the participant code of conduct, understanding the safety and emergency planning measures in place, and communicating any safety concerns or hazards to OGE, the SA Leader or host institution.

Safety Tips While Abroad

It is highly recommended you familiarize yourself with the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) website prior to departing which provides detailed reports of hazards or dangers for each country. The College relies upon the Risk Rating System established GAC to assess whether or not participants should engage in study abroad activities in various parts of the world. GAC provides a report for each country listing the various risks and safety on a scale of 1-4. The College does not support study abroad activities in regions or countries that have been rated "Level 3 - Avoid Non-Essential Travel" or "Level 4 - Avoid All Travel".

Many other countries have very different security realities from Canada, and it is imperative that you are aware and cautious of these issues and are well prepared for them.

Additional Tips for Safe Travel:

- Before you head off, familiarize yourself with any trouble spots and/or potential conflicts in the countries you plan to visit, and be aware of current events while you are away. Visit the <u>Global Affairs Canada website</u> for current information;
- Protect your valuables from pickpockets by remaining alert and cautious. Keep your valuables safe while traveling. Leave your passport in a hotel safe (at reception or in your room) and carry a copy of these with you when you are out for the day;

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- Don't carry large amounts of cash. Use bank machines, during the day, in highly visible places to get smaller amounts of cash;
- Credit cards are not always accepted by retail or restaurants so be prepared to pay cash as needed
- Do not leave your luggage unattended at any time. Do not agree to carry or check any luggage or other items for anyone else;
- If you are looking for a taxi, 'official' taxi stops are generally located outside airports, train, and bus stations. These may require you to purchase a coupon which normally covers the cost of the fare to your destination:
- Do not impair your judgment by consuming excessive amounts of alcohol or by using drugs;
- Avoid traveling or going out alone, if possible;
- Do not walk alone at night or in remote and unfamiliar places. Stay near busy and well-lit areas;
- Avoid demonstrations. What appears to be a peaceful demonstration can suddenly change into a dangerous situation and you can become caught up in an unwanted situation;
- If you travel alone while in country, leave your travel itinerary, where you are going and when you expect to return, with the international office of the host College and with a friend in country. Keep your family back home aware of your travel plans;
- If your Self-Assessment identified any issues of concern, ensure you have planned for them.
- Ensure that you have cell phone information for the SA Leader, other participants, your planned accommodations, local ambulance and embassy, and that you have planned to access wifi and data as required.

Legal & Political Concerns

- Respect the laws of the country you are in and observe what locals around you are doing;
- Always carry valid identification;
- Become aware of the high-risk areas in your host country and city;
- Avoid demonstrations and student riots stay informed of local issues by reading local newspapers and talking to local people;
- Choose your travel partners carefully if they break the law, you may also be guilty by association;
- Avoid traveling alone and do not hitch hike;

- Try not to attract unnecessary attention to yourself foreigners can be easy targets for thieves;
- Don't take photos where it is not permitted and ask for permission of people before you photograph them;
- Illegal use of drugs including marijuana is a punishable offense in most countries;
- The Canadian Embassy can assist you with non-legal matters so have the embassy contact available in your phone.

Communications Protocol

In the case of an emergency the College will assist participants and their emergency contacts in exchanging information. The Office of Global Engagement will liaise on behalf of the study abroad participant to their emergency contacts in the case of an emergency abroad. Only those listed as emergency contacts who have been granted privacy waivers by the participant will be provided with any personal information regarding the participant abroad. Emergency contacts can contact OGE for assistance in reaching their Study Abroad participant in case of an emergency at home.

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Money Matters

Building a Budget

It is recommended that you create a budget when you apply for a study abroad program to fully understand the costs involved and make a plan on how you will save and pay for all of the related expenses. Understand that there may be financial support in the form of scholarships and student loans to assist with costs. In your budget, be sure to include the cost of the following:

STUDY ABROAD EXPENSES	ESTIMATED COST
International Airfare	
Travel Insurance	
Medical Insurance	
Passport (application or renewal) and Visa application	
Immunizations / Vaccinations	
NIC Tuition fees	
Program Fees	
Special Equipment (uniform, safety gear etc.)	
Miscellaneous (food, transportation, entertainment, etc.)	
TOTAL	

It is your responsibility to read and understand the Study Abroad Refund Policy PRIOR to applying and making any program payments. Please be sure to include costs related to any personal travel in any of your budgeting.

Financial Aid

North Island College offers several Financial Aid options for study abroad participants that may cover all- or a portion of the costs involved. In some cases, specific NIC programs or departments may also provide financial incentives or rewards to their students for participating in study abroad programs.

Accessing Money Abroad

Participants should plan regarding how they will access money while overseas. It is also important to be familiar with the comparative value of money in your host country. Check out the Canada Currency Converter to convert Canadian currency to local currency using the current exchange rate.

Currency Exchange

It is advisable to carry some local currency with you when you travel abroad. All major Canadian International Airports provide currency exchange kiosks for this purpose.

Check ahead and make sure they will provide the local currency for your specific destination. Also, you may want to arrange for this through your home bank before you leave. Should you arrive in your host country during a holiday or after business hours it may not always be possible to exchange money at the airport or access a functioning bank machine or be able to pay for services with a credit card. As such, bring enough local currency to cover your ride into town, minor expenses along the way, and to cover accommodation, if credit cards are not used.

In most countries Canadian currency will not be accepted. However, you can change Canadian dollars into American currency which is more widely accepted. In many countries, only new bills are accepted. It is advisable to consider getting several American \$1 bills that can be used for tipping, etc. until you become fully familiar with the local currency and tipping customs.

Many countries are considered "cash-only" economies and credit cards can only be used in high-end restaurants, hotels, and airlines. Transactions in small eateries, markets, taxis, etc. can only be done in cash (small bills!).

Credit Card

Credit Cards tend to be easily accessible and give competitive exchange rates. The drawback is they may not be accepted everywhere. Always keep receipts, be careful what you are signing as you may encounter manual processing in some places and be cautious of fraud.

Be sure to inform your credit card company that you will be using your credit card abroad and record the customer service number in case you have trouble with your card. Payment through cell phone may be available in some countries.

Debit Cards

In most major cities ATMs are available giving you access to your accounts at home. Smaller cities do not always provide access and there is a risk that your card will be damaged. Each time you use your debit card there may be large processing fees. Be sure to have sufficient funds in your chequing account, as you may not be able to choose from multiple accounts on a local in-country ATM.

Safeguarding Your Money & Valuables

- Understand the local currencynd how it converts from Canadian or American dollars.
- Understand HOW and WHERE to exchange currency.
- Used authorized currency exchange businesses ONLY.
- Record all credit cards and debit card numbers and keep in a safe place.
- Plan to carry a money-belt or other safeguard when carrying cash or currency on your person. If you have front and back pockets carry currency/ID in your front pockets.
- Have access to an emergency fund: If your credit cards are lost/stolen how will you access money while these items are replaced? Cash? Back up credit card? Debit card? Cell phone app payment systems?
- Carry small amounts of cash (small bills) but always keep some extra in an emergency reserve.
- · Don't show money in public.
- Keep valuables (including documents) in a safe place, such as a money belt/front pockets.
- Wear little to no jewelry leave valuables at home.
- ALWAYS know where your passport is and keep it in a safe place.

Additional Tips for Preparing for International Travel

International travel can be an intimidating and stressful time even for experienced travelers. Here are a few key strategies to help participants in preparing for those long waits in airport line-ups, security checkpoints and flights.

Final checks

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Check your flights on-line in advance to make sure your flight is still scheduled on time and no changes have been made to your itinerary.

Check-in with your airline at the airport at least 2 hours prior to the departure of your international flight. This is the common rule among airlines, and it is required to ensure travelers have adequate time to check in, check luggage, clear multiple security checkpoints, and locate their departure gate. International airports can be large and spread out and depending on the time of day, time of year, or travel destination security checkpoints and airport

line ups can grow quickly and take considerable time to navigate. Pay attention, ask questions, and give yourself lots of time.

Carry with you on the plane (NOT in checked luggage) the following information:

- Print out of flight information, including airline, departure/arrival time, reservation number and travel agent contact. These print-outs are occasionally required at some international airports in order to be allowed into the airport.
- · Passport /Visa
- · Boarding passes & checked luggage tags
- Wallet
- Immunization documentation (including COVID 19)
- Emergency contact information & Insurance information
- Medical insurance policy
- Contact information & address of host contact or where you are staying on arrival

Exchange currency at the airport exchange kiosks (International Departures) so you will have some local currency on arrival to your destination.

Take the time to check and double-check you are not carrying any prohibited items that will prevent you or your bags from clearing security checkpoints or boarding the flight (liquids, sharp items etc.).

Do not leave your bags or carry-on items unattended at any time.

Packing for Your Time Abroad

Be aware of airline restrictions for the size, weight and number of both carry on and checked luggage. Consider that in many countries around the world ramps, elevators or sidewalks may not be common and you may have to carry your luggage. A hiking backpack may be a good alternative to the traditional wheeled suitcase

Choose to Travel Green!

As a study abroad student you will have the fortunate opportunity to have interactions with local people that will be more meaningful than a typical tourist interaction. You should be aware of your impact as you travel and should ensure that your travel is responsible as to consider the environment and respect the well-being of local people:

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Tips to travel green

- 1. Pack light!
- 2. Purchase eco-friendly travel products: clothing, reusable water bottle, toiletries, etc.
- Pack your own sustainable travel kit: try a reusable cutlery and straw set that comes with a reusable straw, fork, spoon, and even chopsticks. These kits are easy to pack.
- 4. Save electricity. Turn off lights, air conditioner, and heaters when you are not in the room.
- Use water sparingly. Many communities face water shortages and water usage costs money. Take quick showers.
- Don't litter! Even when you notice the locals doing so, try to find a container to dispose of your litter. Always recycle if possible.
- Learn at least a few basic phrases in your host community's language. Learn how people greet each other and practice that greeting. Body language is also important. Be astute and adapt your body language appropriately.
- 8. Buy locally produced products and services. Don't bargain too much over an extra dollar or two that will go a lot father for your seller than for you.
- 9. When you return home, volunteer or get a job working with worthwhile causes in the regions you visited or with the issues you have witnessed.

~	PACKING LIST SUGGESTIONS
	Clothing (pants, shorts, t-shirts, long-sleeve shirts, sweater, formal outfit)
	Footwear (walking shoes, sandals)
	Outerwear (Rain jacket, hat, etc.)
	Toiletries
	Prescription medications
	Non-prescription medication (e.g. Gravol, Imodium, Ibuprofen, etc.)
	Notebook and pen
	Cell Phone/Camera
	Small gifts (e.g. Canadian pins, etc.)
	ID cards, Credit Cards
	Money belt
	Passport
	Emergency contact sheet
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Cultural Introspection for Study Abroad Student Participants

When immersed into an unfamiliar culture, it is much more challenging to know what is expected of you. Taking the opportunity to develop cultural reflexive practices, "preduring-and post" an outbound mobility experience creates pathways to increase not only curiosity but also empathy towards diverse others.

By broadening your mind with an attempt to understand a new culture and immersing yourself in it, a new founded respect for your own roots will emerge along with a richer comprehension for the lives and customs of others.

OGE provides the opportunity to use a non-traditional/decolonized International Study Abroad and Intercultural Exchange Learning Toolkit to reflect about your own cultural identity, how you perceive and interact with others and how others interact with you.

The <u>Breaking out of the Box toolkit</u> is an interactive tool for developing culturally reflexive practices. It is an online course containing six modules. The modules can be completed **pre-, during and post, a study abroad / international exchange experience**. At each of these 3 stages, you will go through the same processes of reflection, however delving deeper during each iteration.

Learning about ourselves, our culture, our values and beliefs, and how all these shape the way we interact with diverse others is an iterative and ongoing process that requires ever deeper opportunities to reflect. By engaging multiple times with this process, we hope learners will come to a deeper sense of empathy for self and others.

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