



## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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## Predeparture Preparation

### Advance planning is a key to success

Making accommodations takes time and collaboration between you, the U.S.-based staff, and host institution. Without advance notice, problems may arise that could prevent the Study Center or host institution from considering your request.

### Communicate early and clearly with UCEAP

U.S. non-discrimination laws prevent institutions from asking about or considering disability status during the application process. Disclosing your disability is a personal decision. It can change depending on the situation and the need for an accommodation. Consider disclosing and documenting your disability if you want to ask for an accommodation.

If you choose to disclose, do so early, your EAP campus advisor will work with you to identify reasonable accommodations.

Explore options in advance with your campus EAP office and the UCEAP Systemwide Office. Be clear about your needs, consider alternative ways to meet them. This will help minimize miscommunications and assumptions.

If you do not think you will need accommodations abroad, it is still important to talk about potential accommodations with your advisor so that a plan is in place, if needed.

Although UCEAP cannot guarantee the accessibility of UCEAP locations, we can provide information and guidance on accessibility overseas. We can also provide information about approximate costs of accommodations at some UCEAP sites so you can budget to pay for these expenses. Most financial aid can be applied to study abroad.

Work with your disability specialist, your campus EAP advisor, and the Operations Specialist at the UCEAP Systemwide Office regarding accommodation possibilities for a particular program.

### About Confidentiality

Once you disclose a disability, UCEAP will only share information with those who need to know. Information is collected and shared to assure appropriate services and accommodations, if available.

### Benefits of disclosure

There are some advantages to disclosing a disability, including:

- **Advance preparation** for your disability-related needs, including learning about available disability-related access or services and arranging or requesting reasonable accommodations. UCEAP encourages you to disclose when possible so we can work with you and the partner university on necessary accommodations (if they can be arranged) so you can have a safe and rewarding experience.
- **Establish connections** with people in the host community with similar disabilities or with the community of people with disabilities as a whole.
- **Reduction in stress** that may come with managing a disability alone, or in worrying who might assist if you are in need.
- **Self-advocacy** in communicating personal preferences and needs to those around you.

**Be flexible; accommodations differ around the world**

Some countries do not use note takers, or may charge for tutoring rather than offering it as a free service. Study abroad requires flexibility for people with and without disabilities. Living in a new culture will bring new challenges, including disability services and accessibility standards that might differ significantly from what you are used to in the U.S.

Many accommodations that are provided at UC campuses may not be available abroad. UCEAP cannot guarantee that facilities and/or support services will be available at each location abroad in the same range and quality as on a UC campus. Valuable sources of information are UCEAP returnees who can outline potential challenges and adventures at a host country. Also, visit the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE), sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and administered by [Mobility International](#).

**How Accessibility Differs**

- Some barriers you may not have experienced in the U.S. may arise while you are abroad.
- Privacy and discrimination protections available abroad depend on the laws of the host country.
- Tutoring may not be a free service at the host university.
- Note takers may not be available, or may be very expensive. Using a recording device abroad is often the best solution.
- Budget for any costs associated with accommodations abroad.
- Some countries require detailed health information before issuing visas, which can delay the process.
- Electricity for equipment or recharging batteries may require adapters.
- Treatment for some behavior disorders (ADD, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, etc.) may differ.
- Sign language interpreters may not be certified or available at all times, and interpreting will generally be in the sign language of the country rather than ASL.
- Some countries quarantine guide dogs before they are allowed into the country.
- Bring mobility aids to use in restrooms without bars or on long train platforms. Safety bars and shower chairs may also be uncommon.
- In some countries the standard width of a wheelchair is narrower than U.S. standards, and non-folding wheelchairs and power chairs are extremely rare. The standard width of corridors varies in different countries and not all buildings are accessible.
- Carry extra spare parts or differing types of casters for a wheelchair.
- In some countries, assistive technology may be used more, while in others you may need to rely on human resources.
- Read about disability laws in the host country, talk to someone with a disability similar to yours, and consider geography, climate, and culture when considering how accessible the country is.

**Submit Critical Documentation**

At your request, your campus office of students with disabilities will write a letter documenting your disability and/or accommodation needs. The UCEAP Systemwide Office will share this letter with the UCEAP Study Center and/or host institution. Special accommodations cannot be researched or obtained without this letter. Keep a copy of this letter for your records.

Bring a copy of your medical documentation abroad, including prescription information. Leave a copy with your parent or guardian in the event that your copy is lost or damaged.



## Know how you will pay for accommodations

Students with disabilities can fund their education abroad program in many ways. Most financial aid can be applied to study abroad.

### UCEAP Scholarships

See UCEAP scholarships as well non-UCEAP resources on the [UCEAP Scholarships](#) web page.

### Social Security (SSI) or Vocational Rehab and Study Abroad

The Social Security Handbook states: “A student of any age may be eligible for Supplementary Security Income (SSI) benefits while temporarily outside the U.S. for the purpose of conducting studies that are not available in the U.S., are sponsored by an educational institution in the U.S., and are designed to enhance the student’s ability to engage in gainful employment. Such a student must have been eligible to receive an SSI benefit for the month before the first full month outside the U.S.”

Work with your VR counselor to add the UCEAP experience in your vocational plan and **understand your benefits and options.**

To continue to receive SSI while studying abroad, ensure that:

- The international exchange course of study is not available to you in the U.S.
- The study abroad program is sponsored by a school in the U.S.
- Participation is critical to your educational and vocational success
- You are eligible for SSI for the one month immediately prior to leaving the U.S.
- You will earn academic credits towards your high school or college degree while abroad

Contact the [National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchanges](#) (NCDE), [www.miusa.org/ncde](http://www.miusa.org/ncde), for more information.

**Be aware** that you are responsible to finance accommodations abroad. If you receive funding from the Department of Rehabilitation, have the Rehabilitation Representative contact the UCEAP Student Finance Analyst for your program to process payments.

### Confirm accommodations

- Confirm with Program Specialist at the UCEAP Systemwide office that accommodations have been arranged and will be provided overseas.
- Know the name and contact information of the overseas contact who knows about onsite accommodations.

### Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Security Checks

TSA has established a program for screening of persons with disabilities and their associated equipment, mobility aids, and devices. Their program covers all categories of disabilities (mobility, hearing, visual, and hidden). Access the [TSA website](#).

Overall guidance for travelers with disabilities is located on the Department of Homeland Security’s Transportation Security Administration website [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov). This guidance includes specific tips by disability/medical condition.

If you have additional concerns or questions you can also contact TSA’s Call Center at 1-866-289-9673 or by e-mail at [tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov](mailto:tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov)

For concerns about potential civil rights violations, you can contact TSA’s Office of Civil Rights at 1-877-336-4872, TTY 800-877-8339 or by e-mail at [tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov](mailto:tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov)



## How to prepare for living abroad

- **Read** about the country or community where you will be living. Know how they view disabilities by reading, talking to returned students, and attending predeparture orientation sessions.
- **Learn** the local language to communicate about your disability accommodation needs.
- **Prepare** for people to offer or physically help you without asking you in your host country as they may have different attitudes about independence and personal space. Keep yourself safe and ask for what you need.
- **Find** local doctor or counselor contact information and locations.
- **Contact Mobility International in the U.S. ([www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org))**. They can provide information about the country's disability organizations, support groups, social groups, sports clubs, and local disability rights laws.
- **Communicate** with local disability groups about equipment repair locations or other services if needed.
- **Have** repair tools and extra parts with you to fix adaptive equipment.
- **Research** the local transportation options and what will work for you. Learn about accessible transportation resources or community support in your host country. Not all forms of transportation may be accessible. Know whether you will need travel accommodations during required program field trips, travels within the city and between destinations. Budget adequately to cover your transportation costs (e.g., taxis, if public transportation is inaccessible or inadequate).
- **Be flexible** about your disability accommodations and problem solve with a positive attitude.
- **Find out** what you need to know to stay healthy.

## Questions to ask as you prepare for UCEAP

### Processing Disabilities (LD, ADHD, Psychological, Brain injuries)

- Will you need note takers for class?
- What are the partner institution's policies on extended exam time?
- Is the partner institution willing to authorize your usual test accommodations based on American medical documentation?
- What tutoring services might be available and at what cost?
- If you need to see a doctor or therapist for psychological concerns while abroad, have you established this contact prior to departure?
- Have you considered bringing a personal recording device for lectures? Do you have permission to record lectures?
- Are books available on tape or CD?
- Who will fund any special accommodations?

### Chronic Systemic Disorders

- If you have respiratory problems or severe allergies, what is the air and environmental quality in the city you are considering?
- If your condition is affected by temperatures, what is the climate in your prospective host city?
- What prior notification has been given to the instructors regarding potential absences should your condition flare up unexpectedly?
- Will you need extended time on assignments?



- If you normally receive test accommodations, do you have authorization through the partner institution to receive the same accommodations there?
- What special dietary considerations might you have?
- If there are extra expenses associated with special accommodations, how will you pay for them?

### Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Will you need an interpreter or Realtime Captioning? Who will fund this accommodation?
- Where/how will the interpreter be hired?
- What is the hourly rate for interpreters in the host country? (Note that interpreter costs vary widely by country and even within the same country.)
- Does the interpreter know American Sign Language? Sign language is not universal and may differ between countries that have the same spoken language. Find out the differences before leaving. It may be possible to depart early to learn the new sign language.
- If you are taking a personal FM system, can you obtain batteries in your host country that work for your device?
- Who will notify your instructor of the need to wear the FM microphone?
- Will you need a note taker?
- Are captioned videos available?
- How will you pay for accommodations?

### Mobility/Orthopedic Disabilities

- Will you take one or two wheelchairs? Electric or manual?
- Do you need a transformer? Is the voltage in your host country compatible with your transformer?
- How will you ship your chair abroad?
- Where can your chair be repaired abroad?
- Do you need to make additional arrangements to get from the airport to the orientation site or to your partner institution?
- Are the streets and/or sidewalks paved or cobblestone? Are there curb cuts for wheelchair access?
- What is the accessibility of the partner institution and city (elevators, bathrooms, classrooms, housing, transportation, etc.)?
- Is voice recognition software available?
- Will you need note takers, scribes, or transcribers?
- What kind of field trips might your program go on? Are they accessible?
- Are lab or library assistants available in your host country?
- Do you need extended time on assignments or exams?
- How will you pay for accommodations?



### Visual Impairments

- Have you contacted the consulate of your host country to determine if you will need to put your guide dog in quarantine?
- Will special housing or food arrangements be necessary for your dog? Is your dog allowed into the classroom?
- Are alternate formats (books on tape, Braille, e-text, scanning, CCTV, etc.) available?
- Will you need a mobility assistant to help you?
- Have you obtained maps of your host city and enlarged them to become familiar with directions before departure?
- What kind of test accommodations will you need?
- Is there Braille signage on buildings, elevators, classroom, ATMs, etc.?
- Will you have access to computer software in order to write papers or read assignments?
- How will you pay for accommodations?

### Housing and Living Situations

- What options are available through the program(s)? Is it possible to get a single room? A first-floor room?
- Are the room dimensions physically accessible to individual needs?
- What are the sleeping arrangements like?
- Are there accessible bathroom and shower facilities within any of the housing options? If not, how can UCEAP address these accessibility issues?

### Auxiliary Aids or Assistive Devices

- Are replacement parts for auxiliary aids going to be readily available in the event damage occurs?
- Is there access to agencies or professionals who can repair auxiliary aids, if necessary?

### Psychological Disabilities

- What could you expect living in a different country?
- How would you get a three-month supply of medication? Is your medication legal? What if your symptoms flare up while abroad and you need help?

### Resources to help you plan for study abroad

- [Access Abroad at the University of Minnesota](#)
- [Mobility International USA](#)
- [National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange \(NCDE\)](#)



## Potential Issues for Students with Disabilities

### Dominant viewpoints of the host culture will influence your experience

All cultures have complex belief systems related to disabilities and their own explanations, roles, and expectations for peoples with disabilities.

- You may experience increased staring, negative stereotypes, or unsolicited assistance.
- Views on disabilities, independence, confidentiality, respect for authority, and individual rights differ from country to country, and these views will definitely affect your experience.
- Learning disabilities may not be recognized in some countries; be prepared for the fact that a disability may be culturally defined.
- You may face some unexpected complications. Some people may not feel you can function, and others may try to do things for you instead of letting you do them yourself.
- In some cultures, locals may be blunt and direct in asking you about your disability. In some countries, there may be very little infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities.

Some people hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may act in a way that may appear as discrimination against you.

## Once Abroad

### If you decide not to disclose your accommodation needs in advance

Accommodations may not be possible to arrange without advance notice. This is why it is best to disclose your accommodation needs to UCEAP staff in the U.S. before departure. If you do request accommodations, follow up with staff in the UCEAP host country after arrival.

### Know who to contact if accommodations are not working while abroad

Before departure, be certain that you have the contact information for the host university disability office or the local UCEAP representative. If you arrive and requested accommodations are not in place, you need to contact the local office.

Do not delay contacting someone. If you do not have a local contact, e-mail your campus EAP advisor or the UCEAP Operations Specialist.

### Take ownership of your experience abroad

Know how you can accommodate your own needs. For example, memorize bus routes and identify people willing to assist or support you informally with shopping, monitoring changes in your condition, or keeping you on schedule.

It is important to prepare yourself because reality can be different from what you may have read before departure. For example, in theory, every metro station may have an elevator, but you will not know how many are in working condition until you get there. Sign language interpreters may not be certified or available at all times, and interpreting will generally be in the sign language of the country rather than ASL. For those with vision impairments, some countries quarantine guide dogs before they are allowed into the country.

### Accept assistance from others and anticipate differences

An institution abroad may or may not be adequately equipped to service students with disabilities. If accommodations are not what you expected, it is important to know how to be flexible and seek help. Learn how to ask for help and refer to your disability in the local language.

If you can't find a personal coach, AA meeting, or therapist abroad, access them remotely by Internet, Skype, or telephone (plan ahead and make sure this is possible before your departure).

If readers and scribes are unavailable, mail order audio or Braille books through your campus Disability Services Offices or bring assistive technology and software from the U.S.

Information: [www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets](http://www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets)