



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Predeparture Preparation

Advance planning is a key to success

This is an important step to facilitate a safe and rewarding experience while you are abroad. Even if you are managing on campus without accommodations, it is important for you to talk with your campus advisor about possible accommodations. Living and studying abroad can be life changing and exciting, but may create unexpected triggers that could exacerbate or reactivate conditions.

Experienced UCEAP staff are committed to working with you. Making study abroad accessible for students with disabilities is important to us. Although UCEAP cannot guarantee the accessibility of our locations, we can provide information and guidance with advance notice, including the approximate cost of accommodations so you can budget to pay for these expenses.

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

Your Responsibilities as a Participant

- Fully research all UCEAP opportunities and country resources. It is best to be open-minded about your destination. Your personal, educational, and career goals are all essential parts of this equation.
- Talk to your UCEAP advisor on campus and your Office for Students with Disabilities.
- Meet all deadlines.
- Consider how you will pay for accommodations abroad. Contact [Mobility International](#) for funding sources.
- Disclose disability-related condition(s) early.
- Recognize that accommodations planning, if accommodations are available abroad, requires extra preparation time.
- Work with your Office for Students with Disabilities, UCEAP advisor on campus, and UCEAP Systemwide Program Specialist to determine what is possible.

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. To identify reasonable accommodations for a particular program, work with your disability specialist, your UCEAP advisor on campus, and the Operations Specialist at the UCEAP Systemwide Office. Outline your needs and 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 (particularly if you are not registered with your campus disability services office) so that a plan is in place. Disclosing in a timely fashion can be critical to your success.

About Confidentiality

Once you disclose a disability, UCEAP will only share information with program officials who need to know. We collect and thoughtfully share information to facilitate 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.
- Establish connections with people in the host community with similar disabilities or with the community of people with disabilities as a whole.
- Minimize 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

Study abroad requires flexibility for people with and without disabilities. Living in a new culture may create new challenges. Physical accessibility and learning support systems and resources may differ substantially from your campus. For American students with disabilities who may be accustomed to an independent lifestyle, traveling in some countries may require a major shift in perspective and approach. In some cultures, interdependence is more valued than independence. Other countries do not use note takers, or may charge for tutoring rather than offering it as a free service.

Many accommodations that UC campuses provide 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 benefits in a host country. Also, visit [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.
- You may have to pay for accommodations.
- 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 American Sign Language.
- Some countries quarantine guide dogs before allowing them into the country.
- Safety bars and shower chairs may be uncommon. Bring mobility aids to use in restrooms without bars or on long train platforms.
- In some countries the standard width of a wheelchair is narrower than U.S. standards, and non-folding wheelchairs and power chairs are 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 to find how accessible the country is.



Submit Critical Documentation

If you are registered with your campus disability office, you can request a letter that verifies that you are registered and lists accommodations you are eligible to receive on campus. The UCEAP Systemwide Office will share this letter with the UCEAP Study Center and/or host institution. We may also need to communicate with you to rank accommodations you are currently receiving in order of need as accommodations regularly provided in the U.S. may not be available abroad or may need some modifications. Special accommodations cannot be researched or obtained without this letter. Keep a copy of this letter for your records. This letter is also needed if a deficit course load will be requested. We cannot accept letters that were written for past UC campus terms.

Bring a copy of your medical documentation abroad or know how to access it online from abroad, including prescription information. If you are taking prescription medication, you will need a letter from your doctor indicating your condition, treatment, and medication regimen. This letter is particularly important when you arrive with medications and go through local Customs. Leave copies with your parent or guardian.

Know how you will pay for accommodations

You are responsible to finance accommodations abroad, and can fund your program in many ways. In addition to UC financial aid, scholarships and grants, other sources of funding to consider include: **vocational rehabilitation**, veteran's benefits (contact the Department of Veteran's Affairs), **crowdfunding**, and personal savings.

Financial Aid

Most financial aid can be applied to study abroad.

UCEAP Scholarships

See 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) for more information.

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 before departure

- Confirm with the Operations 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

Overall guidance for travelers with disabilities, including specific tips by disability/medical condition, is located on the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration website www.tsa.gov.

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).

How to prepare for living abroad

- Read and learn about the country or community where you will be living. Find out how they view disabilities, talk to returned students, and attend predeparture orientation sessions.
- Practice the local language to communicate about your disability accommodation needs. Learn words that describe your disability in the local language.
- Prepare for culture shock with an extra layer of different attitudes around disabilities: Host families may be extremely protective, or the opposite, unwilling to accommodate you. Local staff may be concerned about your safety. People may stare or ask you questions. Locals may help you whether you request it or not.
- Locate a local doctor or counselor and keep contact information on hand. Call the UCEAP Operations Specialist for assistance.
- Contact Mobility International in the U.S. (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. See the [Health](#) chapter in this guide for helpful tips.

Resources to help you plan for study abroad

- [Mobility International USA](#)
- [National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange \(NCDE\)](#)



Questions to ask as you prepare for UCEAP

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

- Are note takers available?
- 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 audio books available?
- 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?
- If your condition is affected by altitude, what is the altitude of the program location and field trips?
- 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 (audio books, 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?



Once Abroad

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 by country and 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 biased attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may act in a way that may appear discriminatory to you.

If you decide not to disclose your accommodation needs in advance

Accommodations may not be possible to arrange without advance notice. If you are not registered with your campus disability office, you may not be able to get accommodations. It is best to disclose your accommodation needs to UCEAP Systemwide 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 immediately.

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

Prepare for a reality that may differ from what you have read before departure. For example, 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.

Accept assistance from others and anticipate differences

An institution abroad may or may not be equipped to service students with disabilities. If accommodations are not what you expected, it is important 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 phone (ensure that 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.