



# Students with Disabilities

<b>PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION</b>	<b>1</b>
Advance planning and flexibility are key	1
Your Responsibilities as a Participant	1
Communicate early and clearly with UCEAP	1
About Confidentiality	2
Benefits of disclosure	2
Be flexible; accommodations differ around the world	2
How Accessibility Differs	2
Submit Critical Documentation	3
Know how you will pay for accommodations	3
Confirm accommodations before departure	3
Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Security Checks	4
How to prepare for living abroad	4
Questions to ask as you prepare for UCEAP	4
Resources to help you plan for study abroad	6
<b>ONCE ABROAD</b>	<b>6</b>
Potential Issues for Students with Disabilities	6
If you decide not to disclose your accommodation needs in advance	7
Know who to contact if accommodations are not working while abroad	7
Take ownership of your experience abroad	7
Accept assistance from others and anticipate differences	7



# Students with Disabilities

## PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION

### **Advance planning and flexibility are key**

Explore different program options and countries. Consider sharing with your UC campus advisor as you explore different destinations and consider your needed accommodations to be successful abroad.

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

UCEAP staff are committed to working with you. Although UCEAP cannot guarantee the accessibility of all 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 US-based UCEAP staff, and the host institution abroad. You will need to research several destinations and programs along with your campus study abroad and disabilities office. 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.
- Identify several programs/destinations as not all will have adequate services.
- Share Information about your program (academic requirements, field trips, accessibility in the host country, etc.) with the Office for Students with Disabilities, and discuss whether the program is a good fit for you.
- Meet all deadlines.
- Consider how you will pay for accommodations abroad. Contact Mobility International for a list of funding sources.
- Disclose disability-related conditions 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 Programs Specialist to determine what is possible.

### **Communicate early and clearly with UCEAP**

US 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 Programs 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. Consider a range of program options and destinations.

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 may 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 US 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 rest rooms without bars or on long train platforms.
- In some countries the standard width of a wheelchair is narrower than US 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 when considering how accessible the country is.

## Submit Critical Documentation

If you are registered with your campus disability office, request a letter of accommodation (LOA) that lists accommodations that you are eligible to receive on campus. The UCEAP Systemwide Office will share the LOA with the UCEAP Study Center and/or host institution. We will ask you to rank accommodations in order of need, as accommodations regularly provided in the US may not be available abroad or may need some modifications. Many universities around the world are not legally required to offer special services to students with disabilities. Accommodations cannot be researched without the LOA. Keep a copy of this letter for your records. The LOA is also needed if a deficit course load will be requested and must be issued for your term abroad.

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), **UCEAP scholarships**, and personal savings.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY (SSI) OR VOCATIONAL REHAB AND STUDY 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.

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

Contact **Mobility International** for more information.

## Confirm accommodations before departure

- Confirm with the Programs Specialist at the UCEAP Systemwide Office which accommodations have been arranged and will be provided overseas.
- Know the name and contact information of the overseas contact who knows about on-site 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](http://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 pre-departure 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. 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 Programs Specialist for assistance.
- **Contact Mobility International in the US** ([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. See the **Health** chapter in this guide for helpful tips.

## 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 host 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 real-time 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?

## Resources to help you plan for study abroad

- Mobility International USA
- National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE)

## 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 US 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, email your UCEAP advisor on campus or the Systemwide Programs 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 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 resources locally, try to 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 US.