

Guidelines for Conducting Pre-Departure Sessions

Who leads Pre-Departure sessions?

The Program Leader is expected to lead at least 3 pre-departure sessions. Education Abroad is required to be attendance at one session to cover Health, Safety, Insurance, Billing, Financial Aid, and Registration.

Why are Pre-Departure sessions important?

Orientation is essential to any international experience; it ensures students stay safe and healthy while abroad. Part of your role as a Program Leader is to orient students to the specific experience they will have and to counsel them in a range of social, academic, and other practical issues. Your pre-departure should help to:

- Assuage student fears or concerns regarding travel & program elements
- Ensure students are organized prior to the program and ready to begin as soon as they arrive
- Establish and manage student expectations for the program
- Establish group norms before students arrive in-country

How many pre-departure sessions should I hold and when?

We recommend you schedule 3-4 pre-departure sessions, though at the bare minimum, you are required to host one Pre-Departure session with Education Abroad present. You should schedule your pre-departure sessions as soon as your program is *confirmed to run* (has met minimum enrollment).

Where can I hold Pre-Departure sessions?

Education Abroad can reserve a room for you on the sixth floor of **KMC (Karl Miller Center)**, space permitting. Please contact the Graduate Assistant or the Education Abroad Advisor responsible for your program for help with this, if we have not contacted you already.

Alternatively, if it makes sense to hold the session **in your department space** (this works especially well if your department has a dedicated space for your majors or minors) please reserve this and let us know the room and time so we can (1) be in attendance and (2) add it to the website and other promotional materials. Keep in mind you can always hold them online via Google Meet, Skype, etc.

Pro-Tip: Build out these resources in your D2L shell, so students have access to them ahead of time the Office of Academic Innovation will open a D2L shell for you before the CRN is created.

Are Pre-Departure Sessions considered class time?

It is up to you; most pre-departure sessions include going over the syllabus and laying the groundwork for the program, which includes academic content. If this is the case, you can consider this as class time, meaning you can require students to attend these sessions as part of their participation in the program. Further, feel free to weave in your coursework to the suggested pre-departure session activities.

The following is a **suggested template** for your Pre-Departure sessions. We encourage you to request that your in-country provider join via Skype if possible, or provide material to help you complete many of these elements.

Pre-Departure Session: Overview of the Syllabus & Itinerary

To Bring:

- Copies of the syllabus for students
- Copies of the itinerary (if available)

Icebreaker: Suggested Activities

1. **[Step In / Step Out](#)**: Teambuilding activity that focuses on identifying commonalities among participants. Can be adjusted to suit each program and destination.
2. **[Ten Questions for Students](#)**: Allows you to assess where students are in terms of preparedness, comfort level with destination and travel, and opens up the conversation among students. We suggest you also participate and complete this questionnaire, and share your honest answers with your students! This activity also works well in the Culture Session.

Exchange Contact Information

Set up a group chat in WhatsApp or a Facebook group to give students a place to post cheap flights, make group travel plans, or ask questions of one another.

Discuss Roles & Responsibilities

What services will each of the following provide? What services will they not provide? Below are some **example** responsibilities, it is not an exhaustive list:

Program Leader (s)	In-country Partner Staff	Education Abroad Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of record • Provides both academic & personal support throughout the program • Point of contact in case of an emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will provide Orientation upon arrival • Point of contact in case of an emergency • Lead cultural activities • Provide logistical and cultural support throughout the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pre-departure preparation and support • Can be contacted in case of emergency, but cannot offer immediate assistance the way your local contact can • Manage all administrative aspects of your program (billing, registration, financial aid, etc)

Review Academic Expectations

Introduce the Syllabus & Itinerary (if available) and be prepared to address the following:

- When will coursework begin and when is the final project due? **Education Abroad can extend grading deadlines to accommodate program dates.** Make sure students know if they have responsibilities to the program before and after the program dates, as many will travel on their own outside of program dates.
- How will you manage absences or tardiness? These programs are intensive and have large amounts of content compressed into a short period. It is important you set expectations of attendance early.

- Are all students completing the same content? Are there graduate or undergraduate sections that require different content or have different expectations?
- Grading is often based on non-traditional academic work; make sure students understand their responsibilities for being a full participant on this program.

Academic Expectations Suggested Activity

1. [Learning Styles Survey](#): This inventory can help you as a program leader to understand your students better. You will be teaching them in an intensive environment that may require you to have a more in-depth understanding of your students' learning styles than usual. Take the time to evaluate your students ahead of time to better support them while abroad.

Review Behavioral Expectations

- Draft a group charter and code of conduct for the program; use this opportunity to create group norms & agreed-upon behavior. Discuss expectations that students hold each other accountable for poor or inappropriate behavior.
- Outline any program-specific rules you wish to enforce (Curfews? Tardiness or Absences?)
- Establish communication expectations of students & their families and friends back home, when should they put the phone down and engage with the program, and when is it ok to step away from the group and the program?

INVOLVE YOUR PROVIDER!

They can provide orientation on specific cultural norms of the host country. Ask them to Skype into your session to answer student questions!

Travel & Logistics

Remind students that the Ed Abroad Office hosts Travel Basics sessions each term that cover international travel, packing tips, and strategies for communicating while abroad. They can see these on our Ed Abroad Events Page on www.pdx.edu/ed-abroad. If you would like the Ed Abroad office to cover these topics, just let us know! However, please note the content will not be specific to your particular location. Be prepared to discuss or answer questions about the following:

- Remind students about the Travel Resources on www.pdx.edu/ed-abroad
 - STA Travel offers an STA Airfare Deposit program, allowing students to pay a small non-refundable deposit. Students then have until 14 days after their departure to pay the balance, allowing them to use a financial aid refund, if available. Located in the *Student Resources* tab → *Before you Depart* → *Airline resources*
- What airport should students fly into? Are there multiple options that may confuse students, or that perhaps offer less expensive options?
- How can students get from the airport to the program site?

- What time of day do they need to be ready to begin the program? Should they plan to arrive the day the program is set to begin? If they need to arrive early, where do you recommend they stay?
- What can they expect for housing? Do they need to bring bedding? Will they have roommates? Will you allow them to self-select or will you assign them?
- What can they expect for dining options? What if students have dietary restrictions? How accommodating is the schedule? Do they have many group meals or will they be able to source their own meals?
- Highlight facilities students will be accessing, will they have access to WiFi? Telephones? A/C or heating? Public transportation?
- Should students plan to use cash or cards while abroad?
- When is it appropriate for students to travel independently, if at all? (Can students leave town on a free day or weekend?) **PSU policy allows program leader discretion. Students must leave an itinerary with a program leader prior to leaving the program city. You have the ability to restrict travel if you feel it will negatively affect the overall program structure.**
- Does everyone in your program have a valid passport? Passports must be valid 6 months beyond their return date to the U.S. Is anyone on your program in possession of a passport from somewhere other than the U.S.? **They should talk to Ed Abroad if this is the case!**
- Outline what is included in their Program fee, and remind students what is not (refer to the VikingsAbroad.pdx.edu brochure page for an articulation of *Estimated Student Expenses*, and reference your Provider Proposal, if available).

Travel & Logistics Suggested Activities

1. **[Basic Things You Should Know Before You Go](#)**: We recommend you, as the program leader, complete this content before this session. Either upload this as a quiz on D2L or complete it as a group during your pre-departure session. Encourage students to access their free NY Times subscription (they are enrolled in this by the Ed Abroad Team) to gather content & keep up to date on country-specific material with news alerts.
2. **[What Do You Need to Know and Do Before You Go?](#)** Have students complete this activity ahead of your first group session or together as a group. It is intended to encourage students to think about the things they (and you!) need to know before departure.

Remind them they have an Education Abroad Advisor who can go into depth one-one-one with them regarding their international travel! Students make appointments on www.VikingsAbroad.pdx.edu

Pre-Departure Session: Health & Safety while Abroad

STOP

**Before this session, you must have reviewed the Ed Abroad Risk Management Handbook and completed your Risk Management Plan in your VikingsAbroad.pdx.edu Faculty-Led Program Proposal.
Don't know how to access this? Ask your Education Abroad Team!**

Program Leader to Bring:

- [Emergency Cards](#) - pre-filled by the Program Leader, or blank, to be filled out together as a group. Some program leaders fill these out and have them laminated for their students.
- Your Risk Management Plan, completed by the Program Leader ahead of time, with the help of your in-country provider

Establish a Communication Plan

Establish a group communication plan as a group in case of emergency. We recommend either:

- A group chat on WhatsApp or similar web-based messaging service, or
- A phone tree for larger programs that cannot utilize a group chat service

Complete the Emergency Card

Students should leave this session with a completed emergency card in their wallet or purse (also encourage them to snap a photo to keep in their phone, but make sure they have a hard copy). The program leader should have copies of this emergency card in country in case students lose theirs. Some faculty choose to fill this out for the students, some even have it laminated for the students to take overseas.

Discuss Alcohol & Drug Use for Your Program

The PSU policy allows program participants to consume alcohol while abroad in a culturally responsible manner. However, it is **at your discretion** to prohibit the consumption of alcohol by your students while on a PSU faculty-led program. Please note, your in-country provider may have their own rules governing consumption, which they will brief students on at orientation when they arrive.

EDUCATION ABROAD ADVISOR

45 MINUTES + TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Health & Safety

Financial Aid

Marketing Your Experience Abroad

Insurance

PSU Student Code of Conduct

Billing & Registration

Pre-Departure Session: Preparing for a Cross-Cultural Experience

Students do receive online cross-cultural preparation via the VikingsAbroad portal and have the option of attending an in-person Pre-Departure Orientation the term prior to going abroad. However, these experiences do not allow for country- or program-specific content as they are open to all study abroad students. Therefore, we ask that program leaders consider building in some cross-cultural content prior to departure to help equip students to successfully navigate their international experience. If you would prefer an Ed Abroad Advisor join you to lead these activities, just let us know. If you have alternative activities you would prefer to build in to your pre-departure sessions, it is at your discretion to do so.

Preparing for a Cross-Cultural Experience: Suggested Activities

1. **Goal Setting, ask your students to document:**
 - a. What are their academic, personal, and professional goals and expectations for the program?
 - b. How does the international experience fit into these goals?
 - c. What do they hope to gain from the experience?
 - d. How will they measure this growth?
2. **[You as a Culturally Diverse Person](#):** Each of us has a unique worldview made up of life experiences; students (and program leaders!) should keep these worldviews in mind as they travel. In particular, discuss the ways in which students' experiences as Americans might color the way they view the world and how others may view them in return. [Click here for the Facilitator Notes](#).
3. **[International Perspectives on U.S. Americans](#):** This is a good complement to the **You as a Culturally Diverse Person** exercise, use it to discuss the reality of traveling abroad as a representative of the United States. How can students successfully navigate potentially uncomfortable interactions?
4. ***Becoming Familiar with Culture: [The Iceberg Analogy](#) & [Identifying Aspects of Culture](#)*:** These activities encourage students to think about observations vs interpretations & serve as a reminder that it is important to resist forming cultural interpretations based solely on what they can observe early in the experience.
5. **[Autoethnography Exercise](#):** This activity encourages students to engage with their own cultural backgrounds, values, and interests that come from it.