



## KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

#### *Health and Safety Policies*

#### Introduction

Kirkwood Community College considers the health and safety of students on education abroad opportunities as one of its top priorities. While no organization or institution can guarantee the safety of participants, the risks can be significantly reduced if program staff, students, parents, and advisers at the host and home institutions all work together.

In response to the concern for the well-being of the students, Kirkwood has developed policies related to education abroad opportunities which require all students participating in an education abroad experience, as part of their time at the university, to complete a Study Abroad Contract form.

#### Health Insurance

Your health and safety during your study abroad experience will depend on the choices and precautions taken prior to, during, and following your time overseas. However, there are no guarantees or absolutes with regard to health and safety in any setting, especially an international one. Therefore, Kirkwood International Programs purchases International Health Insurance on your behalf as part of your program fee.

#### Pre-Departure Health Procedures and Precautions

All participants of Kirkwood Short-Term Programs are required to complete a Medical Report. International Programs must be advised of all health issues to make any necessary preparations. If there is any further information we should know regarding your health, please contact the International Programs Office.

#### Medications

Here are some points to consider carefully about medication before traveling abroad.

##### Over-the-Counter Medicine

- Take anything used regularly, even if seasonally, with you (ibuprofen, Tylenol, antihistamines, etc.).

- Some over-the-counter medications in the United States are prescription medications abroad, and vice versa.

### **Prescription Medication**

- Take an ample, complete supply of all your prescription medications that will last for your entire time abroad (if allowed by your host country).
- Some medications used in the United States are not available abroad. Check with your host consulate.
- Take a written copy of your prescriptions with you in your carry-on bag.
- Consider taking a written prescription of any medication your doctor thinks you might need, even if you don't currently take it.
- Make sure the prescriptions are written in generic terms, specifying all ingredients.
- Leave in original labeled bottles.

### **Medication and Flying**

- The FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) publishes guidelines about what can be carried on the plane or checked into luggage. For up-to-date information visit [http://www.faa.gov/passengers/prepare\\_fly](http://www.faa.gov/passengers/prepare_fly)
- Pay special attention to new guidelines about liquids and gels. Currently, TSA maintains a 3-1-1 rule for carry-on items. Each passenger may carry liquids in bottles that are 3.4 ounces (100ml) or smaller in 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag. Only 1 quart-sized bag per person is permitted.
- There are also special considerations when flying with medications.
- In addition to reviewing the FAA guidelines, please be sure to check with your airline for their specific regulations.

## **Mental Health**

Many illnesses, particularly emotional or mental, do not go away when you travel, but may actually become more challenging or severe during study abroad.

### **Stress & Fatigue**

- Cultural adjustment issues may cause unanticipated physical reactions such as:
  - Depression
  - Sleep loss
  - Appetite changes
  - Mood swings
  - Sluggishness
  - Stress
- Stress and fatigue will take a toll on your body's immune system.
- You may need more sleep while abroad than you normally do at home.

To feel better:

- Talk to others (students, resident director, etc.) about adjustment issues.
- Do not overdo it - rest is essential for good health and overall well-being.

Remember Compound Effects

- Jet lag + Drinking + Stress + Languages Barrier + Homesickness...

The more adjustments you are coping with, the more you need to take care of yourself.

## Your Personal Health History

By signing the Study Abroad Contract you have authorized Kirkwood or its agent to release medical information contained in the Kirkwood files to health care providers and to secure medical treatment on your behalf in the event of emergency medical illness or injury. You have also agreed to accept financial responsibility for the treatment. However, your health documents will be kept separate from the rest of your application. Only the Director of International Programs, the program leader/assistant, and authorized Kirkwood staff will have access to these documents.

## Physical Examinations

Kirkwood Study Abroad Programs does not require you to have a physical exam before going abroad. We do recommend that you schedule a visit with your medical provider to discuss any concern; mild physical or psychological disorders can become serious under the stresses of life while studying abroad. We also recommend you have a dental check-up and complete any necessary dental work before you go abroad.

## Vaccinations

Carefully read the information provided by your program sponsor on any required inoculations. While the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publish guidelines for immunizations and other health precautions for travelers, only an individualized assessment can help you decide what you should do to prepare. Usually a family physician does not have the necessary background to provide travel information, since travel medicine is a unique specialty. A travel specialist is trained to consider your health history, current medications, drug allergies, and travel plans when recommending shots and other medications.

## Alcohol -General Guidelines

As with many customs, cross-cultural differences exist in the consumption of alcohol. Depending on your host country, you may find the availability and public consumption of alcohol greatly increased or decreased. Often, rules about the acceptability of alcohol use in certain situations or contexts are very different than at home. If you choose to use alcohol, use it responsibly. Keep in mind that being under the influence of alcohol also impairs judgment and increases your chances of being the victim of crime, whether robbery or sexual assault.

- Many countries have laws regarding alcohol and other drug use that are more severe than laws in the United States.
- Your consumption of alcohol or another drug, and/or your behavior while under the influence, might lead to a violation of local laws.
- Certain types of alcoholic beverages may be stronger than what you are used to in the United States.
- You are representing Kirkwood Community College and your actions will reflect either positively or negatively.

## Consequences of Drinking Too Much

### Accidents and Injuries

Accidents and injuries are common among people who consume too much alcohol. Alcohol impairs judgment, coordination, perception, and concentration. Impairment of these skills can result in a range of accidents, including falling down a flight of stairs or tripping on the sidewalk. The injuries resulting from such accidents can be minor or they can be severe. Within the past few years a number of college students have died in accidents while intoxicated. These accidental deaths include several students who have fallen from balconies or bedroom windows, drowned in lakes or ponds on the way home from a party, or tripped on the sidewalk.

### Alcohol Poisoning

Alcohol, when used to excess, can cause alcohol poisoning. The effects of alcohol poisoning can range from vomiting to falling into a coma and subsequent death. Too much alcohol can cause vital organs, such as the heart and lungs, to slow down and even stop, which results in death. Very often someone who dies from alcohol poisoning passes out and is allowed to “sleep it off.” This is a mistake. Anyone who drinks so much that they become unconscious or exhibit any of the signs below should receive immediate attention.

## Unprotected Sex and Sexual Assault

Alcohol use can result in a number of sexual consequences, including unprotected sex, sexual assault contracting sexually transmitted diseases, and unplanned pregnancies. Most sexual assaults involve the use of alcohol on the part of the perpetrator or the victim. Alcohol misuse can result in impaired judgment, which can put you at risk for either committing a sexual assault or becoming the victim of a sexual assault.

## Illegal Drug Use

Illegal drug use and possession are serious crimes. While drugs in some countries may seem easily available, this does not mean they are legal. Penalties for use or possession of illegal drugs can include jail terms, hard labor, and even the death penalty. If you are arrested you are subject to the host country's laws and neither Kirkwood Community College nor the U.S. Embassy can protect you from the local legal consequences. In some places, even association with people possessing or using illegal drugs is considered the same as personal use or possession. While on the Kirkwood Community College study abroad program, you are responsible for obeying all local laws. If KCC hears reports that program participants are using drugs or breaking other local laws, they will be confronted with the issue and may be asked to leave the program.

## Security Concerns

If you have a problem while abroad, contact the Faculty Staff Leader first. In case of emergency, U.S. citizens should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate (international students should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate of your country or nationality); if there is no U.S. presence in the city you are visiting, go to the Australian, Canadian, or British Embassy or Consulate where you can get informal assistance and guidance. **If bad news about your host country becomes international news, call your parents to update them and reassure them that you are OK.**

Our office is in contact with the U.S. Department of State in Washington concerning international travel recommendations. Currently, as long as the U.S. Department of State does not warn against travel to a particular place, Kirkwood generally does not warn against travel, but may issue advice regarding safe travel practices. Kirkwood tries to notify its students immediately, should a Department of State travel warning be issued.

## Personal Security

In accordance with Department of State advice on safe travel, we advise you of the following standard safety precautions:

- When traveling, keep a low profile; try to blend in with the host country's surroundings as much as possible. Find safety in numbers and help to look out for others in your program, but try not to stand out as a group or individual. Dress conservatively; avoid flashy dress and obviously American-style clothing, particularly American sweatshirts, T-shirts, and jeans. Avoid American

logos on your belongings and clothing.

- Be aware of your surroundings, noticing people that are near you and their behavior. Avoid being drawn into political exchanges, debates, protests, or conversations that might become incendiary or overly emotional. Be wary of people who seem overly friendly or interested in you.
- When traveling for more than a day outside your home base, leave a daily itinerary of your whereabouts with the Faculty/Staff so that you can be contacted immediately in case of emergency.
- Prior to your departure, print photocopies of your credit card, ATM card, passport, etc. Keep the originals with you, keep one set of copies in your luggage, and keep one set of copies in the U.S. with a trusted friend or relative. You will also need to inform your credit card and ATM companies that you will be travelling internationally.
- Use a money belt to carry your passport, tickets, some money, credit cards, etc. and store money in various locations. Don't take expensive personal items with you.
- When traveling outside of your program site, select your accommodations carefully. The most inexpensive lodging may not provide adequate security and it may be located in an unsafe area.

### Using Credit and Debit Cards Abroad

- Credit and debit cards have become the preferred way to access funds domestically and internationally. It is important to notify your credit card company or bank of your upcoming study abroad and tell them where you plan to study and travel. Your card can and often will be frozen if there is an unusual pattern of purchases. Carrying a 2nd, back up, card can help if this does happen even after calling your card company. You can ask for a back up copy of your main credit card, but don't activate it abroad unless your first card is frozen.
- Check with your credit card company if there are certain transaction fees associated with using the card in a foreign country.
- Keep a reasonable supply of cash on you. A reasonable amount will depend on where you are studying and traveling.

### U.S. Consulates and Embassies

If you find yourself in trouble, first contact the Faculty/Staff Leader whenever possible. After that a U.S. Consulate or Embassy is a good resource for many dilemmas while abroad. Program participants will register with the U.S. Consulate at an orientation session. There are U.S. embassies in more than 160 capital cities of the world. Each embassy has a consular section. There are also consular officers at about 60 U.S. Consulates General and 20 U.S. Consulates around the world (Consulates General and Consulates are regional offices of Embassies).

- Replace a Passport.

- If you lose your passport, a consul can issue you a replacement, often within 24 hours. If you believe your passport has been stolen, first report the theft to the Faculty/Staff Director and local police to get a police declaration. This process is smoother if you have a photocopy of your passport.
- Help Get Funds.
- Should you lose all your money and other financial resources, consular officers can help you contact your family, bank, or employer to arrange for them to send you funds. In some cases, these funds can be wired to you through the Department of State.
- Help In an Emergency.

### Help in a Natural Disaster or Evacuation

Kirkwood International Programs monitors current events in regions where Kirkwood students are studying abroad. If you are caught up in a natural disaster or civil disturbance, you should let your relatives know as soon as possible that you are safe, or contact a U.S. consul who will pass that message along to your family through the State Department. Be resourceful. U.S. officials will do everything they can to contact you and advise you. However, they must give priority to helping Americans who have been hurt or are in immediate danger.