Global Opportunities Work Abroad Survival Guide
Introduction

The Work Abroad Survival Guide is designed to help you prepare for your international work placement. You may also need to refer to it for specific information while you are away.

The Survival Guide includes general Health and Safety considerations, as well as tips on helping you prepare for and manage your placement.

While it does contain some information on Erasmus+, the content is aimed at all students who are going to work overseas.

The Work Abroad Survival Guide contains references to external resources. These are for your information. Their inclusion is not an automatic endorsement by QAA.

We wish you the best of luck on your placement and look forward to seeing you upon your return.

The Global Opportunities Team
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Prepared for your work abroad placement can seem a daunting task, with seemingly endless lists and forms, so we have created this survival guide to take you through the preparation for your trip in a (hopefully!) coherent and easy way.

Please don’t leave everything to the last minute – it could cause you a lot of stress, which is the last thing you need when leaving the country! Use our pre-departure checklist to make sure in advance that you have everything you need.

As well as help before you go, we have also provided information to help you while you are there, from tips and hints on keeping safe and healthy, to a list of British Embassy and University contacts that you may need whilst abroad.

These pages are designed to give you an easy, safe and stress-free placement abroad, so please read through them when you have the chance. For many of you, this will be your first time living in another country, and we want you to enjoy it!

We like to think that we have covered everything you could need, but if you need information you can’t find, or if you need any help or guidance at all during your trip, please do not hesitate to get in touch via outbound@exeter.ac.uk.

Good luck, have fun and stay safe!
Pre-departure checklist for outgoing work placement students

This checklist is not exhaustive, but is designed to help you in your preparations for your period abroad. The more information you are able to obtain about your employer and host country, before you leave Exeter, the better. Don’t leave everything to the last minute!

- As soon as you know where and when you are going, check whether you need to take any special health precautions or have inoculations.
- Ensure you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and make sure the EHIC has not expired or will not expire while you are abroad. It is free to apply via: www.ehic.org.uk or 0845 606 203
- Arrange adequate work abroad insurance cover.
- Monitor and comply with advice supplied by the FCO travel alerts and register for email updates for the area you are going to.
- Contact students who are currently abroad or who have returned for advice; use the Study and Work Abroad Buddy Scheme
- Make arrangements for the payment of your maintenance loan
- Complete and submit UK Bank Account Details on the Finance tab of your Student Record accessible via the SRS tile on iExeter
- Read the assessment arrangements for the Year/Semester Abroad (from your College). Make sure you know how you are going to be assessed and how much your year abroad is worth in relation to your overall degree.
- Prepare materials necessary for completing any required coursework while overseas.
- Make a note of name & contact details of your Year Abroad coordinator/tutor/personal tutor/Global Employability Team and send yourself an email with these details.
- Your placement details should be automatically uploaded to your Student Record. When you register for your time away, please check that this information is correct. This is a requirement so that the Registry Office can inform your Student Finance body and so that we can invoice you correctly.
- Ensure you have an up-to-date passport (with an expiry date of at least 6 months beyond the end of your time abroad).
- You should carry important contact details with you in paper format just in case your mobile phone or laptop breaks, is lost or stolen. It is advisable to also carry paper copies of insurance, travel and medical documents and have them easily accessible. Some people advise sending yourself an email with these details so that they are easily retrievable. You could use this useful ‘little lifesaver’ print out from moneysavingexpert.com to record useful phone numbers you may need in an emergency.
- Pack birth certificate + copies (+ translation).
- Give up-to-date e-mail and postal addresses (home & abroad) to your College.
- Check out the FCO travel checklist https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-checklist.
- Re-register as an Exeter student online when prompted to do so.
  - Erasmus+ Programme requirements and information is available on the Global Employability webpages
  - Non Erasmus+ information is also on the ELE page.
Managing your money

Doing a work abroad placement is a fantastic opportunity both academically and personally, but it can come at a price, depending on your personal lifestyle and spending habits! Make sure you are realistic about your spending habits and budget beforehand. You may spend more than you would if you stayed at Exeter because you will want to take advantage of all (or at least some) of the available opportunities while you’re away.

In an ideal situation, your will be receiving a sufficient income from your placement. However, this isn’t always the case, and if it is, your expenses may exceed your salary. If finances are likely to present a problem, you should look at your options carefully and budget accordingly. During your work placement, you may also have to factor in accepting offers from colleagues for lunch or dinners and other unforeseen expenses.

All students need to think in advance about their daily financial needs and budget accordingly:

- How will you receive money while abroad?
- Is it possible to open a new bank account abroad?
- Can you use your home-based account overseas? Are there cash point machines available for your card abroad?
- How will you pay your bills while you are away?
- What is your financial back-up plan?
- Have you thought about all the costs involved in doing a work abroad placement e.g. work abroad insurance?

Money

You may wish to open a bank account abroad – if so, check with your employer if it is possible and ask about the procedure and necessary paperwork. You may need to take a letter from your home bank to do this. Please also check with your home bank whether charges will be made to withdraw cash abroad. Please note that debit and credit cards are not accepted as widely in some countries as in the UK. Whatever you decide to do, remember to check with your home bank at least six weeks before you go abroad. Don’t forget to factor in any large transactions you will need to make when you arrive (such as rent) and plan accordingly.

Student Loans

While you are abroad, you are still eligible for a student loan. You should contact your relevant Student Finance body who will assess your eligibility for both tuition fees and loan support during your year abroad. You will find further information at https://www.gov.uk/student-finance

UK Access to Exeter Bursary

If you started your course on or after September 2012 then you will be eligible to receive the full Access to Exeter Bursary and it will be paid as normal. For further information please contact SID on sid@exeter.ac.uk

Student Finance

The Registry Office informs all Student Finance companies of students who are spending a year or a semester abroad.
Hardship and Retention Fund

The Government gives every university funds each year to assist students who need extra financial support because they have higher than expected costs. Most awards from the Fund are in the form of grants, although some short-term loans may be available to meet temporary hardship such as delayed Student Maintenance Loan or severe cash-flow problems. Further information and application form available Hardship and retention fund

Accommodation

It is your responsibility to find accommodation for the duration of your time abroad. It makes things infinitely easier if you arrange this before you leave the UK. You might consider going out early to track down the perfect apartment. If you are renting privately, please read your contract thoroughly, not forgetting the small print and question anything that is unclear to you. For tips and hints from other students please go to:

- GlobalGraduates
- In Spain – try Aluni.net

Getting organised

Everything you need to sort out before you go away may seem like a mountain of paperwork, but completing as much as possible now means that when you arrive you can start working and enjoying yourself.

General documents

Passport & Visa

It might seem obvious but please check your passport is valid for the whole duration of your stay. It should have an expiry date of at least 6 months beyond the end of your semester/year abroad. If your passport is near its expiry date, we recommend applying for a new one (be sure to give yourself plenty of time). As always when travelling abroad, it is advisable to keep a copy of your passport at home, along with other important documents, and take a spare copy with you, but don’t keep it in the same place as your actual passport.

Ensure you know if you require a visa, and ensure you have a valid visa for the duration and purpose of your stay.

Birth certificate

It is advisable to take the original (and a photocopy) of your full birth certificate with you. Do not part with the original.

Photographs

Take plenty of passport-sized photographs to use abroad on official cards.
Tip for keeping copies of key documents

A top tip from a past student is to email yourself a scanned copy of your key documents (passport, visa, insurance, birth certificate, hi-res digital scans of passport photos etc.)

Things to consider

Email communication

It is important to check your Exeter email regularly and feel free to contact your Study Abroad Coordinator or the Outbound Team if you encounter any problems. The Global Opportunities office and your Coordinator will help and support you as much as possible while you are abroad, provided we are made aware of any problems. In line with the Data Protection Act (1998) no member of staff at the University of Exeter is able to discuss details of any student with a third party (including parents or next of kin). It is therefore your responsibility to contact your Study Abroad Coordinator and/or the Outbound Team at Exeter regarding any significant change in circumstances or serious difficulty you encounter.

Please ensure that you register online in September so that your Exeter email address is activated in preparation for your year abroad, as this is the ONLY address we will use to contact you with updates throughout the year. Please follow the instructions on the University of Exeter homepage.

Mobile phones

If you are intending to take your mobile phone with you remember to check that you can make international calls, and check the call rate as you may find it expensive. If you do decide to take it, ensure you have adequate insurance or call barring above a certain limit should the phone be lost or stolen.

Information from other students

Talk to students who have already been abroad during their degree or to visiting Erasmus+ students from the relevant country and try to pick up useful advice. Returning students may have been asked to write a student guide for those who follow them - ask for a copy from your college Coordinator. Some colleges make these available on the Web and these sites are well worth visiting as they contain a lot of helpful information.

The Erasmus+ Student Network and the International Society were set up in 2001 for all students involved in University exchange programmes. For further information please go to: https://www.exeterguild.org/societies/erasmusstudent/

Packing and shipping

Students are advised against shipping belongings in advance. Most universities cannot store student packages prior to students’ arrival or when travelling outside term time. Remember that what you take with you will have to come back! Always check your airline’s luggage restrictions and stay within them unless you have the money to pay excess baggage or the heart to discard your beloved items at the airport! Remember to check UK customs rules about any items purchased abroad.
Your work placement

How to prepare

Preparation is key

Two essential things to be aware of when you are preparing for your work placement is what is expected of you and conversely what you are expecting from the placement. You will also need to think of lifestyle adjustments that will naturally follow from completing a work placement abroad and the organisational skills needed to balance different aspects of your experience.

Managing expectations

Problems can arise on placement when students feel that their expectations are not met and managing expectations beforehand is often the key to solving these problems. It is important to reflect on the nature of the placement beforehand and aspire to realistic goals, targets and expectations. It may be useful to talk to a tutor about this beforehand or discuss the placement with a previous work abroad student. Try to engage with the employer about what their expectations are in terms of competence and responsibility. A detailed list of roles and responsibilities will give you a better idea of what to expect from your placement. Unfortunately, nagging doubts prior to your placement can prove detrimental to your experience, especially if you were unable to secure your first choice placement, so try to approach the experience with an open mind. It may be that over the course of the placement your career plans are revised as your experience of the industry allows you to make more informed decisions about your future. It may be useful to think of the placement in terms of the employer’s perspective to understand what is expected from you.

Adjusting to working life

Students often struggle with the transition from student life into a 9-5 working lifestyle, as the day-to-day logistics are very different. Be aware that a ‘typical’ student lifestyle may not be sustainable when trying to hold down a 9-5 job and impress your colleagues. A work placement may also take up more time than you anticipated in terms of the hours worked and the time spent travelling to and from work. Sorting out study or accommodation problems while on placement may prove a challenge so it is important to factor this in when planning. The key here is to be organised and plan ahead, to make sure you have key deadlines in your diary before you go abroad.

Your first day

Before your first day:

- Make contact with your supervisor at least two weeks ahead of starting the placement to confirm arrival day and time, and request any joining instructions, such as:
  - Is there anything you should read before you start the placement?
  - Is there any documentation or ID they require you to bring?
  - What’s the dress code? If unclear, go smartly dressed and then see what other employees are wearing when you arrive and tune in to this ‘dress code’ on subsequent days.
- Ensure you have a copy of your placement agreement and/or employment contract (digital or hard copy) with you when you travel.
- If possible, conduct a trial run of the route so that on your first day you will be confident in getting to work on time.
• Keep an open mind about your internship beforehand and during the first few days.

On your first day:

• Allow extra time to get to your workplace on the first day.
• Pack pens, a notepad, and if requested, your laptop. Don't forget a snack in case you get hungry.
• Remember the basics when meeting colleagues: smile, eye contact, firm handshake.
• Find out if there is a more formal expectation of dress for important meetings (e.g. with clients)
• Don't panic if you can't remember everyone's names. When introduced to someone try repeating their name to help you remember it.
• Try making a rough floor plan of the office with people’s names by their desks: it will come in very handy!
• If you are in a large office, focus on remembering where your desk is in relation to other areas such as the toilets, the staff room, the canteen, the reception etc.
• Make full notes when being taken through tasks and processes.
• Check lunch arrangements, including whether you can eat at your desk.
• At the end of the day check your boss is happy for you to go and whether there is any formal system for departing.
• Make sure you check where you can and can’t save your work. Sometimes a computer may be set up to clear the desktop or delete the 'My Documents' folder when you shut it down so make sure you don’t lose hours of work by not knowing where to save something. This is something that catches many interns out and can be very frustrating. If in doubt, email the work to yourself or add it to your Google Drive/Dropbox etc. so that you know it is safe.
• For week one - consider sitting with your mentor/supervisor/manager in the first few days and creating an action plan that outlines clear objectives/a work plan for the first few weeks of your placement.
• REMEMBER! Don’t expect the first day to be the highlight of your internship. The first few days of any new position will inevitably be dominated by administrative procedures and the general settling in process. This is particularly true of an internship where the company may have to spend some time establishing what level of tasks you are able to complete. So if you are feeling a little disappointed after the first few days, please don’t panic!

You and your colleagues

It is normal to expect an adjustment period when arriving to a new working environment. There are plenty of unwritten rules and previous history between colleagues that you haven’t covered. Remember, it will take a few weeks before you really start getting to know your workmates so let yourself ease into the placement’s social side. Begin by starting to get attuned to the hierarchies and find out who is responsible for what function. You will find different levels of formality and personality differences will be a factor; try to observe and make educated guesses when dealing with different people.

The best thing is not to expect too much at first but gradually you should try to find common ground with your colleagues, using breaks in the working day to get to know them better. Do not be afraid to ask colleagues for help. You shouldn't bother them with every single small query you may have – it is best to take an educated guess if it is not a major issue. Should you have any problems with a specific colleague, try to stay out of their way so as not to force the issue. If you must work with them, treat it as part of the learning experience – you are developing office politics skills. Remember that you are in a place of work and maintain a professional attitude at all times, try not to take things personally.
Not feeling included? Remember:

- Organisations have very different levels of staff interaction on a personal level and you may have to make more of an effort to be included in social events than you have previously at university
- You may find it hard to establish common ground, but persevere in getting to know your colleagues as it will make your placement much more enjoyable and make you feel more part of the ‘team’
- Don't immediately take things to heart and get upset if you feel someone isn't being responsive

Not feeling valued? Remember:

- You are making tricky transition from a narrowly defined academic world to an unfamiliar environment. Putting forward ideas at company level is different to seminar contributions where your opinions have been highly valued, so don’t expect too much from the outset
- The best way to gain respect is through doing consistently good work

Your mentor

Your mentor is your main port of call for discussion and feedback relating to your internship, and while the nature of mentoring will vary from company to company, every good internship should have one, even if it is an informal arrangement. You can talk to your mentor about serious work issues, such as what you are learning and how you are progressing. You can also raise personal problems if they are affecting your work. Do not seek out your mentor to talk about minor information that is not relevant to your professional development.

Your boss

When starting your internship you should establish who has responsibility for you and your work, remembering this may be more than one person and is subject to change. Be aware that different bosses will focus on different skills and require different things from your output. Always try to maintain a good level of professionalism in your relationship with your manager, and while there should be no reason that you break any office rules, but, if you do, offer your boss a contrite apology.

Serious issues

- If there is a serious issue with one or more colleagues, do not be afraid to raise it with your mentor. You can also contact your Study Abroad Coordinator, the Outbound team and refer to advice on the Exeter website or contact the Guild Advice Unit.
- If you feel you are being bullied or harassed in your work placement you should contact your personal tutor, your Study Abroad Coordinator and the Outbound team as soon as possible. See http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/dignity/examples/ for more information on the University’s stance on workplace bullying and harassment.
Preparing for your placement: Professionalism

What is professionalism?

Professionalism is working with a desire to give your best at all times and in every situation, and acting in a fair and diligent manner. You must pay meticulous attention to courtesy and honesty with colleagues and clients. It’s important to maintain consistently high levels of professionalism and to uphold the quality of service and your work.

Key characteristics associated with professional conduct include someone who (is):

- Knowledgeable and well prepared
- Willing to take responsibility and committed to ongoing training and development
- Demonstrates networking spirit
- Maintains high standards of performance
- Cultivates relationships
- Competes, but doesn’t win at all costs!

Different organisations will refer to professionalism in different ways. Some will have a focus on organisational values, others on personal values and others on cross-cultural sensitivity/awareness.

Organisational values

- High level statements such as: ‘vision’, ‘mission statement’, ‘goals and objectives’
- Stress the importance of respect for others
- Commitment to teamwork, honesty, integrity, professionalism… and profitability
- Often explicit and shared on the employer’s website

Personal values

- Honesty, confidentiality and integrity
- Punctuality, commitment and a good work ethic
- Reliability, responsibility and loyalty
- Positive attitude, motivation and energy
- Collaborative skills and good team player skills
- Passion and a willingness to learn

Cultural sensitivity:

“Tolerance, inter-cultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where peoples are becoming more and more closely interconnected”

Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the UN

Culture:

A system of beliefs and values shared by a group of people/organisations

- Awareness of your own culture, understanding of cultural difference and the ability to adapt.
Office Etiquette

Getting to grips with the **in-house style and office etiquette** is something that you will encounter towards the beginning of your placement but it will also be an ongoing process of adapting and observation. They key here is to take cues from your colleagues and make educated guesses if you are unsure about something.

Some pointers:

- As a recent BBC journalist said at an employer presentation, “You have two ears and one mouth – try to use them in that ratio!”
- Find out birthday and drinks routines from colleagues
- Also find out the in house email style
- When emailing, be careful, as harmless office banter can spread easily and once an email is sent a permanent record is created. Always re-read your emails before hitting send!
- The Internet is strictly for work purposes only – we have heard of students being fired for using Facebook and gambling websites at work!
- Phone system – prepare a help sheet of standard phone phrases and routines
- Use an electronic/Outlook calendar to track meetings, tasks and deadlines
- Find out procedure for time off, sickness, holiday booking and recording
- Find the house style for voicemail and out of office email responses
- If invited to a meeting, make sure you know why you’re there – to present, contribute or observe
- Be professional in your email communication

Social media etiquette

- Think of your online presence as your personal brand and PR.
- Establish your company’s social media policy for staff. If there isn’t one, find out what the norm is for your colleagues.
- Stick to the rules! Don’t be tempted to have a cheeky look at Facebook if it is banned.
- Be careful not to confuse personal and work accounts.
- Do not attempt to add all your colleagues as social media ‘friends’, but do consider connecting with them on LinkedIn.
- Double-check your privacy settings and ensure you have hidden sensitive parts of your social media profiles.
- Be careful what you say on social media – remember that it is a public sphere.

Questions to ask

- How do I address people (e.g. Sir, Mr Tardelli, Paolo)?
- When to use friendly personal pronouns and verb inflections etc. e.g. in French "tu" rather than “vous” with one another? How this is suggested and by whom?
- What is the management structure?
- Whom do you need to speak to first?
- How is advice/criticism given and received?
- When is it appropriate to speak in your own language?
- Is there a set time for coffee or lunch?
- When is it appropriate to tell a joke or use humour?
- Are you expected to socialise with colleagues?
How to solve problems with your placement

If you do encounter any problems on your placement, remember that taking steps to improve the situation will allow you to assume control and develop problem solving and creative thinking skills. Completing a work placement is an invaluable learning experience that will help you build on your global skill set.

Finding solutions to problems can be a positive growth experience in terms of the rest of your career. Reflecting on how you have coped with challenging circumstances is a common question at job interviews; remember that work placements are all about observation and learning.

If you are encountering serious issues on your work placement, do not be afraid to raise it with your mentor or talk to the Outbound team.

Not happy with your range of tasks?

If you are finding the nature of your work unsatisfactory

- **Try to avoid complaining** - see what else you could be doing and make a statement to your boss on why changing your job tasks may be beneficial to everyone. If you have been given previous tasks assure your boss that these tasks will be completed.

If the whole placement feels ‘wrong’

- **You may want to go back to the drawing board in terms of what you wanted to achieve from the placement** and see how you could still achieve these targets in your current environment. Take the placement and its challenges as a learning experience that will help you make more informed decisions about your career.

Feeling out of depth?

A placement is a learning experience, but students often forget this and feel stupid because they have to ask for help and can’t deal with all the complex processes from the outset. This can be overwhelming, and may lead to students not wanting to continue their placements.

If you’re feeling out of depth

- **Please don’t panic, it’s normal not to be able to cope with everything from the outset.** To help you feel more confident take lots of notes (e.g. people’s names, important contact telephone numbers) until you commit them to memory but remember that asking for help isn’t something to be ashamed of and it won’t reflect badly on you. Don’t take the assessment of your performance personally, you will improve over time and everyone feels like this in a new situation. As you mature into the job, you will be able to contribute your unique skills and attributes to the job but you must accept and expect that the work placement will pose personal challenges for you from time to time.
Unsure about levels of responsibility?

Too much responsibility?

- If you feel that you are unsure about the levels of responsibility given to you discuss it with your mentor or supervisor, it may be that they have overestimated your industry knowledge but remember that it is normal to feel out of depth at the beginning of a new placement from time to time.

Not enough responsibility?

- It is unrealistic to expect highly complex and interesting projects from the outset. It is useful to see your placement as an apprenticeship - starting from more menial tasks such as filing and answering the phone (and making cups of tea!), allowing you to ‘settle in’ and introducing you to company policies, personnel and departments. A positive and competent attitude towards all tasks will accelerate your removal to more complex tasks. During the settling in period it’s not unreasonable to be requested to perform these menial tasks and also from time to time later on; all jobs have less exciting sides to them along with more interesting projects and tasks. If you feel your work is too menial after the settling in period, try to volunteer yourself for tasks in the office you feel you could tackle effectively.

Quantity of the work

- Having too many demands and too little time will lead you to feel overstretched and lower your job satisfaction, especially as you will likely struggle to know what to prioritize. Equally having too little tasks or too many gaps in between can seem demoralising, and leave you feeling as though you are not contributing to the company in a valid way.

Heavy workload?

- If you feel you have abnormally heavy workloads discuss it with your employer using evidence of how much time you are spending on tasks and ask for help prioritizing to check your methods are time-efficient. It is all about suggestions for improvement, not complaining.

Not enough to do?

- If you find you have time on your hands even after checking with your employer/colleagues for extra projects, be proactive about your placement and research the company, create useful documents etc. to get involved with the placement and contribute in every way that you can.

Serious issues

If there is a serious issue with your placement, do not be afraid to raise it with your mentor, the Outbound team or a Dignity and Respect Advisor. You can also contact the Guild Advice Unit.
Insurance

The University requires work abroad students to purchase travel insurance that includes working abroad for international work placements. This should also include their liability to a third party, which is consistent with the requirements of the Erasmus+ programme and with established UK good practice for international work placements.

The University has an insurance policy you can purchase through the Governance, Compliance and Risk team.

In addition to business travel insurance covering emergency medical treatment, assistance and repatriation, cancellation, luggage, personal effects and money, the University’s Travel Insurance policy covers your ‘personal liability’ (i.e. your liability to third party members of the public) whilst you are acting in a personal capacity both outside the workplace and inside the workplace.*

By contributing to the University Travel Insurance policy through the Legal & Insurance Services team, claims, other than emergency claims, are dealt with via the University’s Legal & Insurance Services team. For emergency medical claims you will contact the Insurance company directly by using their emergency telephone number.

Please note that the University is not regulated under the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and so is not legally authorised to provide advice on any other work abroad insurance policy or travel insurance policy.

Notes:

*e.g. if you left your bag in the middle of the office floor and a client fell over and broke their leg you could be held legally liable, i.e. your personal liability: in this instance a claim arising against you would be covered under the Travel Insurance policy.

Where a negligent act by an employee results in a damages claim from a third party, if the negligent act was at the direction of the placement provider/ employer, or following procedures defined by the placement provider, then the ‘public liability’ remains the responsibility of the employer, irrespective of whether the employer is insured against the financial loss that may be incurred.

e.g. if the employer directed an employee to trail a cable across the office to set up a laptop or a data projector, the employer would be legally liable if a client or colleague fell over the cable and was injured: in this instance the claim would be against the employer. The Travel Insurance policy through Legal & Insurance Services team would not cover this, as you would not be personally liable if acting under the direction of your employer.

Be aware that not all placement providers will cover you for public liability while you are working under their direction, which means you run the risk of not being covered at all.
Stay safe

Check before you leave

Embassies and Consulates are an excellent source of country-specific information including safety, security, crime, medical facilities and traffic safety.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office - Travel Alerts

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) offers a service called Travel Alerts. If you are a British national and travelling or living abroad you can subscribe to this information service, which provides the latest Foreign Office advice and travel updates for all countries.

You can access this service and sign up for e-mail alerts here: https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Global Conflict

Unfortunately, there is an increased risk of terrorism and political unrest globally; keeping safe is your responsibility and you are reminded to sign up to FCO Travel Alerts, stay away from any public demonstrations and follow all the advice issued by the local police in your host country. Be sure to respond to any correspondence from the University if you are in the vicinity of an incident so that we know you are safe. Further information on this can be found in the Outbound Pre Departure Handbook.

General Health & Safety

It seems obvious, but please remember that not all things are the same as at home. Before you leave you should attend any briefing sessions organised by your College or the Outbound team.

You can overcome most problems with flexibility and common sense. Making yourself aware of your immediate area when you arrive will help you. You should attend any orientation sessions at your host organisation.

If you are doing a module-related work placement you are required to do a full Risk Assessment before you start the placement. This will cover the following risk areas and how they can be reduced:

Risk factors:

- Workplace factors e.g. risk of accidental injury, lone-working, use of personal protective equipment
- Travel and transport factors
- Location factors
- General environmental/health factors
- Personal factors e.g. health factors which may require workplace adjustments
- Insurance limitations

If you are doing a module-related work placement, you are also required do an Induction Checklist when you start the placement that will cover standard induction to the workplace, which should include:

- Introduction to a supervisor/mentor and other key staff members and their roles explained
- Procedure for reporting absence explained
- Instruction on emergency procedures
- Health and Safety policy received or location known
- Location of first aid equipment and/or station
- First aid arrangements (including names of first aiders and location of first aid equipment)
- Fire procedures & location of fire extinguishers
- Health & Safety at Work Act and your responsibilities
- Accident reporting and location of accident book

**Health & Safety Guidance**

- [Health and Safety on Work Placements (NCWE guidance)](#)
- [Be safe](#) (Learning and Skills Council Basic Guide to Health and Safety)
- Guidance on [safe working practices for lone working](#):
- Guidance on [1:1 and lone working](#) across other settings.

**Theft**

To avoid being a victim of theft, there are a number of safety measures you can take:

- Be responsible for yourself
- Only take essential items with you
- Do not keep your valuables on windowsills
- Be careful when considering inviting new acquaintances home
- Don’t forget your insurance documents

**Alcohol**

You should never feel pressured into drinking, and if you are going to, remember the following points:

- Check your host country’s legal age – It will differ from country to country
- Be aware of your surroundings: who you are with, where you are and how you are going to get home. Remember mum and dad won’t be able to pick you up!

**Gender issues**

Women travelling alone should always be aware and observant, and the following tips may help when faced with an uncomfortable situation:

- Do not be alone with a stranger. This includes people in your residence – ask for identification if you are not sure
- If you find yourself in a difficult situation remove yourself as quickly as possible
- Turn the conversation around by asking questions. Be in control by initiating rather than reacting to events
- If this fails, tell the other person very directly to stop doing whatever is bothering you. Be specific, be calm be serious
- Firmly say ‘no’ to any unwanted invitation and give address information only to people who can be trusted. Be cautious until you can be confident
- Stay in public areas
Sexual harassment is unacceptable wherever you are. If you find yourself in such a situation please seek help from your supervisor, personal tutor or the University of Exeter Dignity and Respect Office to determine a course of action.

LGBTQ

We recommend that you research LGBTQ+ issues in your host country – more information can be found in the Outbound Pre Departure Handbook.

Stay fit and healthy

Inoculations and vaccinations

You should ensure that you check with your GP/Health Clinic and the NHS website that your inoculations and vaccinations are up-to-date for your general health, and specifically for the country you are travelling to.

Prescriptions and other medicines

If you are prescribed or take any regular medication for an ongoing health condition, ensure you have access to a regular supply for the entire period of study abroad, as medications, trade names and dosage levels may vary. Make sure that you label medication and keep it in containers that clearly show the prescription. If you need to take a large amount of medication, it is advisable to ask your doctor to provide you with a diagnosis/prescription describing the medicine.

This may sound obvious, but students who wear glasses or contact lenses should take a spare pair and plenty of contact solution if needed.

Contraceptives

For information about the various forms of contraception and general advice on sexual health please see the NHS website. Obtaining and even identifying contraception overseas may not be straightforward with different names, different packaging and different products. If you are unsure, check with a medical practitioner about obtaining contraception and please always practice safe sex.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Lack of adequate precaution means you could be at risk. If you suspect you have contacted an STD see a doctor immediately. NHS website also has some advice about the symptoms that may need checking and treatments that are available.

HIV/AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome seems to have dropped out of the news, but it has been reported in over 125 countries. It is thought to be more widespread and there is still no vaccine. As with most situations, use your common sense and follow these guidelines:

- Avoid unprotected sex
Don’t use illegal injectable drugs
Don’t share hypodermic needles
Don’t use or touch contaminated, unsterilized syringes or needles
If you are considering getting a tattoo, be sure to only use a reputable tattoo artist, and do your research about their practice

**It is your responsibility to stay safe.**

If you have concerns see the NHS webpage on [HIV/AIDS](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv-aids) for advice on what you should do.

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**Culture shock**

**What is culture shock?**

Living in an environment that is culturally different from what you are used to at home is exciting, but it can also be disorientating and may make you feel emotionally and even physically unwell sometimes. This experience is called ‘culture shock’. ‘Culture shock’ describes the impact of moving from a familiar culture to an unfamiliar one. It is an experience described by people who have travelled abroad to work, live or study; it can be felt to a certain extent even when abroad on holiday. It can affect anyone. It includes the shock of a new environment, meeting many new people and learning the ways of a different country. It also includes the shock of being separated from the important people in your life such as family, friends, colleagues, and teachers: people you would normally talk to at times of uncertainty, people who give you support and guidance. When familiar sights, sounds, smells or tastes are no longer there you can miss them very much. If you are tired and jet-lagged when you arrive, small things can be upsetting and feel out of all proportion to their real significance.

Some typical causes of culture shock are differences in:

- Personal freedom
- Privacy
- Accommodation
- Relationships between people
- The way people dress and act in public
- Workplace culture

Being able to share experiences with friends can help you cope with culture shock, so for health reasons make sure you spend at least some time socialising, even if you are very busy with your placement. Your employer should be able to help you find out about social activities during your time abroad, where you can have fun and meet like-minded people. If you think you are experiencing culture shock, ask for help. Your hosts, your personal tutor, the [Outbound](https://www.lwjgl.org) team or your [Study Abroad Coordinator](https://www.studyabroad.com) will be able to help you.

**What are the effects of culture shock?**

Some of the symptoms of culture shock can be worrying. For example, you may find your health is affected and you may get headaches or stomachaches, or you may start worrying about your health more than before. You may find it difficult to
concentrate and as a result find it harder to focus on tasks at work. Other people find they become more irritable or tearful and generally their emotions seem more unpredictable. Subsequently, all of these effects can increase your anxiety.

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) has a good online resource to help you deal with Culture Shock. While this is aimed at international students coming to the UK, the majority of it will be relevant to leaving the UK too.

**W-CURVE: stages of adjustment experienced during orientation**

![Diagram showing the stages of adjustment during orientation](image)

### Coping with culture shock

- Most importantly: own up to your feelings and accept them. Believe that they will pass; they almost always do. In the meantime, there’s nothing ‘weak’ or ‘childish’ about feeling homesick
- Remember that many other people will have similar feelings, although you may assume that they are doing fine. (You can’t read their minds - and they can’t read yours!)
- Talk to someone. If you haven’t yet made friends at your host university or work place, you can contact the University of Exeter’s student run listening service Exeter Student Nightline: [http://www.exeterguild.org/voice/](http://www.exeterguild.org/voice/)
  - Phone - (our number is on the back of all University of Exeter student cards)
  - Instant Messenger - [https://im.exeter.nightline.ac.uk/webi](https://im.exeter.nightline.ac.uk/webi)
  - Text - 07786 209 309
  - Skype – exeterstudentnightline
• Use your phone. Text people. Send emails. Keep in touch with those you left behind and arrange a firm date to go back and see them (but also give yourself a chance to get involved in your new life).

• Keep busy. Try to establish a routine. The fuller your days are, the less time you will have to feel homesick or lonely

• Make a real effort to join societies/ clubs. This might feel difficult, but there are so many clubs and societies within your local university (despite completing a work placement, you can still join the Erasmus+ Network at your local university) and the city that you are very likely to find something that suits your interests.

• Walk around – explore your new surroundings.

• Don’t expect to get everything right. You’re bound to make mistakes, forget things, and get lost. The first few weeks are all about getting it wrong, wasting time, not understanding, feeling stupid. There will be plenty of time to catch up… after all, it’s common for people to be off with flu for a few weeks and still get through the year successfully.

• Find a supplier of familiar food if you can. Eat a healthy and balanced diet.

• Take regular exercise. As well as being good for your health if can be a way of meeting people.

• Have familiar things around you that have personal meaning, such as photographs or ornaments.

• Don’t make any major decisions. Even if you feel strongly that you don’t want to stay, take your time and talk it over with others.

• Global Graduates has lots of advice - search for Culture Shock; there’s a forum so you can get support from peers around the world and fourth years that have been there and done it!

And if it’s really bad...

• If you can’t sleep or eat properly, see a doctor or contact the local health service.

• Decide whether the best policy is to have frequent contact with home (because contact makes you feel better) or little contact (because contact makes you feel worse). Think carefully about whether or not to go home during holidays, assuming this is an option. Some students find it helps to ease the transition; others find the constant readjustment just makes them feel worse.

• Stay in touch with your Study Abroad Co-ordinator and/or your personal tutor, who may be able to help or put you in touch with Exeter students in your area.

• Ask yourself if you really want to be at this workplace, in this city, at this time. Most people get through bouts of homesickness and go on to enjoy their year abroad. But for some it can be right to leave and take another direction.

Finally...

It is important to stress that culture shock is entirely normal, usually unavoidable and not a sign that you have made a mistake or that you won’t manage. In fact, there are some very positive aspects. Culture shock can be a significant learning experience, making you more aware of aspects of your own culture as well as the new one you have entered. It will give you valuable skills that will serve you in many ways, both now and in the future, and that will be part of the benefit of an international education.

*With thanks to the University of Cardiff, the University of Dundee, and Cambridge University and the UKCISA website for contributions to this text.*
How to apply for CAF (Une demande aide au lodgement)

If you reside in France for more than 8 months then you may be entitled to claim for a ‘CAF’ bursary from the French government to help with your living costs. To be eligible you should meet the following criteria:

*Have lived in France for at least 8 months in rented accommodation that you are paying for”

*Be eligible in terms of income (students generally qualify here)"

You can apply online but you will need to provide copies and original documents of certain things such as proof of address, birth certificate/passport etc.

Stages of filling in your CAF application online are as follows:

1. Firstly, read the terms and conditions before completing your application. Before you begin, have to hand the following required documents:
   - A tax return document or tax assessment form
   - Lease Agreement
   - Proof of study (your Erasmus + agreement should suffice here)
   - Bank details including your bank’s contact details

2. Provide your personal details and professional status, your means/income, and details of your accommodation.

3. A summary of your application will appear to confirm that the details you have provided are correct. **N.B. You will not be able to modify these details once you have confirmed their validity.**

4. If all details are correct, click the “Accept” option and print the summary.

5. You must sign the printed application form before sending it to CAF, accompanied with hard copies of the above requested documents.

6. Your request for the bursary will be considered upon receipt of your application form and supporting documents.

For more information regarding the application process and required documentation, please see the link below (in English):


Global Graduates has a useful article on **Understanding the CAF**

Disclaimer: Whilst we use all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information contained on this website is current, accurate and complete at the date of publication, no representations or warranties are made (express or implied) as to the reliability, accuracy or completeness of such information. Last reviewed 26/03/2018.
How to get a NIE (Número de Identificación de Extranjero) in Spain

All resident and non-resident foreigners with financial affairs in Spain - regardless of whether they are EU citizens or from a non-EU country - must have a foreigners tax identification number or NIE (Número de Identificación de Extranjero). This is the equivalent of a Spaniard’s Número de Identificación Fiscal (NIF) which serves as a fiscal identification number.

The NIE is essential for any fiscal transactions in Spain where money is paid to the Spanish Inland Revenue office. The NIE number should be quoted in all dealings with tax authorities. The number appears on all documents issued in Spain.

Amongst other things, an NIE number is needed to:

- Open a bank account
- Arrange credit terms
- Pay taxes
- Be paid for employment
- Work with short-term employment agencies
- Apply for a business permit and start a business
- Register with social services and arrange receipt of social security benefits

First of all, you will have to go to the nearest police station (Policia Nacional), and you will be requested to provide:

- Passport or valid ID card
- Documents that justify your stay in Spain (e.g. contract, placement agreement in Spanish, proof of Study)
- Passport photographs (at least 2)
- a filled in EX-15 Solicitud de Numero de Identidad de Extranjero (NIE) y Certificados which you can get from the local police station or Spanish Embassy. Please note: all documents must be verified and you may be asked to translate them into Spanish.

Once the application is made, processing may take a month or more. Usually, the office will issue a date to collect the NIE, which should be done in person; notification is not made by post or telephone. In some locations (e.g. Madrid) the NIE may be issued immediately.

Disclaimer: Whilst we use all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information contained on this website is current, accurate and complete at the date of publication, no representations or warranties are made (express or implied) as to the reliability, accuracy or completeness of such information. Last updated 26/03/2018
The Foreign & Commonwealth Office work at home and overseas to safeguard Britain's national security and build Britain's prosperity, as well as support British citizens overseas.

When can they help you?

You should contact the British Embassy of the country you are staying in, particularly if you have been admitted to hospital or detained by the police. Your embassy may also be able to provide the following help:

In case of sickness or injury abroad:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What they CAN do:</th>
<th>What they CAN'T do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aim to contact you within 24 hours of being told that you have been admitted to hospital.</td>
<td>They cannot pay for your medical treatment or provide treatment ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact your family and friends in the UK.</td>
<td>They won’t usually contact or visit you if you have travelled specifically for medical treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaise with your insurance company or medical evacuation company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit you within 48 hours of being told you have gone into hospital if we feel that this is appropriate to your circumstances and there is an Embassy or consulate in the same city as the hospital you are in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of arrest or detention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What they CAN do:</th>
<th>What they CAN'T do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide general information about the relevant country, prison conditions and the local legal system, including whether local legal aid is available.</td>
<td>Get a British national out of prison or detention, or get them special treatment because they are British.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a list of local lawyers and interpreters.</td>
<td>Offer legal advice, start legal proceedings or investigate a crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure any medical or dental problems are brought to the attention of the police or prison doctor.</td>
<td>Pay for any costs incurred as a result of being arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up any justified complaints about ill treatment, personal safety or discrimination with the police of prison authorities.</td>
<td>Forward prisoners parcels sent by family and friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Send messages between prisoners and their families. | Prevent the local authorities from deporting a British national upon release.

If you are a victim of crime abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What they CAN do:</th>
<th>What they CAN'T do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide you with a list of local lawyers and interpreters.</td>
<td>Give you legal advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help you to contact a local doctor if you need medical treatment.</td>
<td>Collect evidence or investigate crimes, or influence the outcome of a trial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact your relatives and friends to let them know what has happened</td>
<td>Assist with travel costs if you are asked to attend a trial abroad as a victim or witness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information on how you can safely transfer money from relatives or friends.</td>
<td>Provide general financial help, except in very exceptional circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an emergency we can cash a sterling cheque up to £100, with a valid banker’s card into local currency. There will be a charge for this service.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are a victim of sexual assault

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What they CAN do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell you about local police and legal procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompany you to the local police station and where possible we can try to make sure you are interviewed by a female officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a list of local lawyers and interpreters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help you to deal with the local authorities in arranging a medical examination where possible with a female doctor if that is what you would prefer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depending on local laws and customs we can also arrange for you to get advice on sexually transmitted infections, and on pregnancy and abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact relatives or friends if you want them to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The British Embassy can also offer advice and support for a number of other problems you might encounter whilst abroad. For more information, please visit the FCO’s information page: [http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/)
Provide information on what professional help is available locally and back in the UK consult our police advisor who can consider using the services of a Sexual Offences Trained Officer from your local police force to advise and help you.