

## Semester Abroad Step-by-Step

### **STEP 1: Select a program**

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Congratulations on your decision to study abroad! Now that you have decided, please review the following guidelines to assist you with the enrollment process. In the first step of the process students must select the semester program they are interested in applying for.

**Simply listing a country is not enough;** the student must select which semester program they are interested in. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the appropriate advisor to go over their needs. Things students should have in mind include:

- a. What kind of classes do you want to take abroad?
- b. What are your goals?
- c. Will your major allow for a semester abroad?
- d. Is there a language requirement?
- e. If the school an exchange partner or a fee-paying institution?

### **STEP 2: Gather application materials**

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The Study Abroad Application packet consists of the general application, medical questionnaire, liability waiver, terms and conditions, participant contract, and course approval sheet. Though most of these forms ask for general biographical information their importance should not be underrated. In addition to the packet the following are needed:

- a. **Transcript:** Though students may submit an unofficial transcript from FACTS.org they should keep in mind that should they be accepted an official transcript is required. These are available from the USF Registrar's Office and cost approximately \$8 (as of 12/2006).
- b. **Personal Statement / Letter of Intent:** Perhaps the most vital element of a student's application, the personal statement is the student's chance to explain to the selection committee why they should be selected for exchange. Students should include personal reasons but more weight is given to academic needs and a willingness to act as an ambassador from USF to the host institution. Students should address how the exchange will be of benefit academically and professionally after graduation. Statements must be no more than 500 words.
- c. **Academic Letter of Recommendation:** Students must provide a letter from either a professor or an academic advisor familiar with him / her both as a student and as an individual. A letter should outline any strengths the writer has personally encountered when dealing with the student. Ideally, the letter will touch on the student's academic aptitude, adaptability, maturity, and general intellectual curiosity. Students are encouraged to provide the letter writer with a copy of their personal statement, resume, and at least 1-3 months in which to write the letter depending on that department's academic etiquette. **Letters must be submitted with the application** in a sealed envelop and signed across the seal.
- d. **Course Approvals:** Though not a pressing concern at time of application; students should be aware that approvals are a time consuming process and should begin addressing them early in the process.

### **STEP 3: Application submission**

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Applications must be submitted in their entirety by 5:00pm on the advertised deadline to the Study Abroad Office. Students mailing their applications should mail them with enough time to ensure they arrive by the deadline. In most cases this is 3 – 5 business days prior to the deadline. Application deadlines are normally September 15 for spring exchange and February 15 for fall exchange. Should either of these dates fall on a weekend or holiday, the deadline is moved to the nearest business day

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(Friday if it falls on a Saturday or Monday if it falls on a Sunday).

#### **STEP 4: Confirm Nomination**

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Should the student's application be nominated for exchange a USF acceptance letter and payment contract will be sent to the student's local address. Students have 2 weeks to sign and return both documents to the Study Abroad Office along with a non-refundable \$500 deposit which goes towards the student's fees abroad.

#### **STEP 5: Partner Application**

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Students must complete the partner university's application along with any immigration documents the other university requires. At this point **USF Course Approvals** must also be submitted to the USF Study Abroad Office.

#### **STEP 6: Financial Aid**

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Financial aid is the student's responsibility and the Study Abroad Office does not automatically generate the required documents. Students seeking to use any kind of aid must submit the Study Abroad Financial Aid Contract directly to the Office of Financial Aid. Students should complete this form as soon as possible as it requires approval from Study Abroad and their academic advisor. Please see the financial aid checklist for a full list of steps including confirmation of enrollment and steps for Florida Prepaid. **If students have any questions how financial aid is applied to Study abroad, they must direct their questions directly to their financial aid counselor in the Office of Financial Aid.**

#### **STEP 7: Housing and Immigration**

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Once student applications have been forwarded to the host institution and the students have been accepted, the foreign partner will contact the student regarding housing and immigration. These are vital elements to the student's program and because of the personal information involved (passport concerns, detailed medical information, credit card or banking information) the Study Abroad Office is not directly involved in the process. It falls to the student to ensure these matters are taken care of in a timely manner, though their study abroad advisor is available to answer questions and act as a liaison to the partner institution.

#### **STEP 8: International Health Insurance**

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Students in Option 1 (Competitive Reciprocal Exchange) or Option 3 (USF Direct Enrollment Study Abroad) semester pricing options (please see Semester Pricing Option handout) are automatically enrolled in USF's group international health insurance for up-to 5 months during eligible program dates only. Students must have their insurance card and policy outline prior to departure: If 2 weeks before departure the card has not been made available to the student contact the Study Abroad Office.

#### **STEP 9: Pre-departure Meeting**

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At the end of each semester the Study Abroad Office will host a pre-departure meeting for all out-going students. Attendance is mandatory. If students are unable to attend the scheduled meeting due to class or work schedules they must contact the study abroad advisor prior to the meeting and set up an appointment to review the missed information: this should be a last resort.