Planning for Time Abroad:
Taking Care of Yourself

Spending a period abroad is the most fantastic opportunity and one that we warmly encourage as many students as possible to take up. Now that you have decided that you want to go abroad as part of your degree*, we strongly advise you to plan for your wellbeing away from Sheffield. It is your responsibility to do this but staff at the University of Sheffield are here to work with you to ensure that your experience is as beneficial and positive as possible. Remember that not everywhere has the same kind or level of support available.

All students should be aware of issues relating to working within a different culture and away from their normal support and friendship networks. Some have additional needs which may need some additional preparation.

We would like you to think about how you manage situations now and where you might need to plan for a different way of managing when you are away. You should start work on this now. You could take this sheet to service providers (e.g. counselling, GP, study abroad tutor) in Sheffield to help you discuss and plan your time abroad.

*Volunteering or working abroad in vacations

The University does not provide support for activities that are not part of your studies. However, there is information here to help you plan your time abroad.
**Adapting to a new culture – perceived stress, homesickness**

- Your whole life experience!
- Day to day support networks e.g. friends, family, student societies
- How socially diverse is multicultural in the country you're going to?

**Ethnicity issues**
- Equality legislation
- Day to day support networks e.g. friends, family
- How socially diverse is multicultural in the country you're going to?

**Talk to students who have been to your selected country to find out what they experienced**

**Gender issues**
- Equality legislation
- Sexual orientation – suitability (generally) of rights regarding domestic violence etc.
- A place of worship? (for people who don’t worship)

**Talk to students who have been to your selected country to find out what they experienced**

**Faith community**
- Rabbinic/ Muslim/ Hindutva
- Religious tolerance – how effective is it?
- What is the social view of my faith group there?

**LGBT community**
- Union Society
- Gay rights/ activities
- Equality legislation
- Will my faith/ faith community there?

**ASD, such as Aspergers**
- Support networks e.g. friends, family
- Can I contact my Sheffield advisers while I'm away?
- See your disability adviser as soon as you can to talk about your plans

**Medical problems, including long-term medical conditions**
- Medication
- Special diet
- Specialist
- Regular GP or clinic appointments

**Talk to your GP about your medication before you leave**

**Physical disabilities**
- Adaptations to accommodation e.g. door alarm, wheelchair accessible shower
- Specialist equipment for elderly
- Note: sign language interpreter/ audiologists

**Talk to your GP about your medication before you leave**

**Long term physical health difficulties**
- Medication
- Regular GP appointments

**Talk to your GP about your medication before you leave**

**Mental health difficulties, including: depression, low mood, anxiety**
- Mental health
- External psychiatric support
- Regular GP appointments

**Talk to your GP about your medication before you leave**

**Financial problems**
- Financial support funds
- Part-time work

**Talk to the Global Opportunities & Exchanges team if your period abroad is being organised through them**

**Political issues**
- Check UK Government web pages
- Check your host university website of where you will be abroad

**Check www.gov.uk/fco and extremism for your period abroad**

* Not applicable if you are not a University placement

† The NHS will only supply a maximum of 3 months of medication for a person to take abroad with them so you need to check what provisions there are in the host country for renewing doctor and getting medications. Some medications may not be as good as a 3 month supply, controlled drugs, complex or high risk mental health medications.
Things to think about

You probably take for granted some of the support that you have in the form of your close friends, family, partner, your GP, maybe a counsellor, a faith community etc. Think about how you will manage with thousands of miles between you and that support and start planning for the different ways you will need to manage and thrive.

Moving to a new country and job/university is one of the most stressful and challenging things you can do - and one of the most rewarding! If you know you might find the transition difficult, you really need to plan and prepare, talk to University staff and talk to students who have been to your destination before.

If you have a disability, legal and social requirements in the UK may accommodate many of the adjustments needed to give you equal access – physical and otherwise – to learning, social activities, everyday living. You may need to plan this for your time abroad as legislation, attitudes and common practice are likely to be different. Women students in particular may find that attitudes can be different and require thinking about.

Legislation and social attitudes to the LGBT community vary widely throughout the countries to which our students go. If you want to be part of that community overseas, you could do some research in advance.

Even if you are spending time abroad as part of your course, check that you have insurance for health, return home in an emergency etc.

We have listed some areas to think about with a few examples of possible actions. Please look through this information and follow up any of the suggestions that might benefit you during your time abroad.

Don’t forget that there is a great resource on your doorstep; not only will there be people from your department who have gone before you, but there are probably students from your selected country registered in the University of Sheffield. Students going abroad through the Global Opportunities & Exchanges team can ask for ways of contacting them through there. Any student can email international.students@sheffield.ac.uk to ask to make contact with students from that country.

Use this space to jot down useful contact numbers:
Staying safe abroad

This starts before you go. In the current climate, it is hard to predict where there might be risks. You can plan what you need to do if an emergency should arise. Check www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo for foreign travel advice.

Plan and follow these tips to help keep you safe:

• Check out the current travel advice about the country you are going to from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. Follow on Twitter @FCOtravel
• Get to know the location and contact details of support services (e.g. in your host university or employer) where you are.
• Make a note of the contact details of the British Embassy/High Commission/Consulate where you are.
• Check your Sheffield and host university email accounts regularly.
• Check the University of Sheffield’s incident page www.sheffield.ac.uk/incidents for information is there is an emergency situation near your University of Sheffield placement.
• In an emergency situation, use Facebook “check-in” facility to let people know you are safe.
• If you are working/volunteering abroad independently, make sure you have funds to leave in an emergency.
• Email support@sheffield.ac.uk for access to Sheffield’s services.

Travel to high risk areas or areas of high concern in vacations

We do not recommend that you travel to high risk areas. If you choose to spend time in such areas, please consider all of the information in this leaflet plus:

• We assume that you have ensured that your trip will not be terrorism-crime or extremist-related BUT is it possible or probable that UK or other countries’ security services might think your trip is related to criminal and/or extremist activity? If so:
  › Check out before you travel that the organisation/employer is bona fide. Seek guidance from Careers Service, Multifaith Chaplaincy team etc.
  › Carry in hand luggage:
    — all documentation relating to your employer or the volunteer organisation
    — evidence of return travel plans
    — evidence of home address and University registration
  › Consider who you can talk to if you want /need to leave your place of work/volunteering.
Useful web pages at The University of Sheffield

**University Health Service**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/health](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/health)

**Counselling Service**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling)  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling/self](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling/self)

**Disability and Dyslexia Service**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/disability](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/disability)

**International Student Support**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/international](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/international)

**Financial Support**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/money](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/money)

**Things not going right...**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/sos](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/sos)

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/mentalwellbeing](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/mentalwellbeing)