Pre-Departure Guide
2015

The SO Pre-Departure Guide 2015 contains important information that will ensure you have an enjoyable experience on the program.
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1. Before your Departure

1.1. Passport
Your passport is your most important travel document. All Australian citizens must have a valid passport before leaving Australia and maintain a valid passport while overseas. Be aware that countries have different passport validity requirements. It’s a good idea to make sure your passport has at least six months validity from your planned date of return to Australia, and to carry extra passport photos just in case your passport is lost or stolen and you need to replace it while you’re away.

1.2. Visa
Once you have received your official letter of acceptance from your host institution you can start applying for your visa. It is important to start this process early as visa processing times vary and may take several weeks. It is your responsibility to make sure you have the correct visa for your study destination. Visa and other entry conditions change regularly, so you need to contact the embassy or consulate of your host country to get the most up to date visa requirements, vaccination requirements, and custom and quarantine regulations (including the legality of medications). The embassy or consulate will also advise you on types of visas, application fees, processing times, required documents, and how to lodge an application. For a list of foreign embassies in Australia and their websites visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) website: http://protocol.dfat.gov.au/Mission/list.rails

International students must inform the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) that you are intending to study overseas at least 28 days prior to your departure. It is your responsibility to ensure your Australian visa is valid and will not expire while you are studying overseas. USC International will provide you with a letter for you to give DIAC confirming that you will remain enrolled at USC while undertaking study overseas. Please contact the USC International Student Services staff for more information (askisci@usc.edu.au).

1.3. Smart Travel
Before your departure it is COMPULSORY to do the following:
→ Visit the Smart Traveller website, the Australian Government’s travel advisory website (www.smarttraveller.gov.au)
→ Register your travel plans on the Smart Traveller website and write yourself a reminder to update your location details when you have a permanent address in your host country.
→ Find the contact details for the Australian embassy in your host country. You can find this by reading the Travel Advice page for your host country on the Smart Traveller website. The embassy details are located under the ‘Where to get help’ tab.
→ Write yourself a reminder to contact USC International after you have arrived at your host institution so we know that you have arrived safely.

1.4. Travel and Health Insurance
It is a good idea to have a general health and dental check-up before you travel overseas, especially if you have any pre-existing concerns. If you’re taking medication with you we recommend talking with your doctor about the medication you’ll need to take and ask for a letter from them detailing what the medication is, how much you’ll be taking with you, and explaining that it’s for your own personal use. Remember to leave the medication in its original packaging so it’s clearly labelled with your name and dosage instructions. Your doctor or travel clinic is also the best source of information about preventive measures, immunisations and disease outbreaks overseas.

The University of the Sunshine Coast carries a Business Travel Policy which covers staff and students of the University for Approved Travel exceeding 50kms from the travellers’ normal place of residence or business premises up to duration of 12 months in any one trip. Associated Leisure/Private travel may be taken either side of or during authorised business trips. The associated Leisure/Private travel portion
must not exceed more than 100% of the Business travel days. Where the duration of the trip is less than 10 days, a maximum of 5 days Leisure/private shall apply.

To view the most current insurance policy visit the following link and log in with the below details:

http://aonline.aon.com
Username: usc_students
Password: Coaststudent2010
  • Click on “Students”
  • Click on “Room Index”
  • Click on “Insurance Program Summary”
  • Download “Travel Insurance Summary_Student_.pdf

For more information please email: insurance@usc.edu.au and copy in StudyOverseas@usc.edu.au

1.4.1. In the Event of an Emergency
If you require assistance anywhere in the world, contact the local telephone operator and ask for a reverse charge call to:

ACE Assistance on +61 2 8907 5995
USC POLICY NUMBER: 04PP007665

In the event of an emergency or sickness instant telephone assistance or advice is available anywhere in the world. This Service includes:
  • Emergency medical assistance and advice
  • Evacuation or repatriation if necessary
  • Liaison and case management with your hospital or medical provider
  • Liaison and case management with ACE insurance
  • Pre-travel advice
  • Assistance in replacing a lost or stolen passport
  • Legal assistance
  • Assistance in tracing delayed or lost luggage
  • Verification of medical insurance to medical providers
  • Guaranteed payment of medical service providers
  • Emergency medical advice 24 hours per day
  • Assistance in arranging medical appointments and hospital admission
  • Advice and information on the location of physicians, hospitals, and dentists worldwide

If you have contacted ACE Assistance for any reason please contact Study Overseas by email studyoverseas@usc.edu.au providing a brief description of the purpose of the call and let us know if you need further assistance.

1.4.2. How to Make an Insurance Claim
Please contact: Studyoverseas@usc.edu.au in order to fill out an incident report and start the claim process.

Note: This summary has been prepared for general reference only. Nothing contained herein prevails over the TERMS, CONDITIONS & EXCLUSIONS of the Policy. Due to the limitations this policy has for personal travel while overseas, we recommend students take out additional insurance to cover your individual needs. The USC Business Travel policy also has a maximum travel limit of 9 months, so if you intend to stay longer than one semester you must take out additional insurance to cover your entire stay overseas. Some host institutions require students to purchase their institution insurance, so check the application documents before purchasing your own personal insurance.
1.5. Transport
You are responsible for making all your travel arrangements for your trip. Once you have received your acceptance letter from your host institution confirming that you have been successfully placed, you can start booking your flights and transfers.
The biggest tip is to visit your host institutions website if you haven’t already and read their International Student guide if they have one available. This is the best way to find out about where the campus is and how to travel there. Keep in mind that you may need to book airport transfers if your host institution has not offered an alternative.
The earlier you book your flights the better, as prices increase the closer to the date you get. If you have the funds you can purchase a flexible fare which will allow you to change your travel dates if you need to. There are many airlines to choose from, it’ll be up to you to search for the flight that suits your needs best.

1.6. Accommodation
Our partner institutions are happy to assist you in finding suitable accommodation. Some institutions will send accommodation forms with their application forms.
There are usually three options when choosing accommodation at your host institution – On-Campus, Off-Campus, and Homestay, but all may not be offered.
On-Campus accommodation can be a great option if you want to meet other international students and if you’re worried about culture shock, as being around other international students can ease the feeling of homesickness. It’s a good idea to apply early for this type of accommodation as places can fill up quickly.
Off-Campus accommodation or private accommodation may be independent from the institution.
Homestay is a great option if you would like to fully immerse yourself in the culture. You have the opportunity to live with a local family and experience the local food and traditions first hand. Whatever you choose, your host institution will be able to assist you, so do not hesitate to ask them for assistance.

1.7. Preparation
There are many resources available to you to get prepared for your overseas study experience. By researching the country, its people, traditions, food, and local attractions, you can prepare yourself for the adventure ahead. Go ahead and Google ‘study in (your destination country)’ and you’ll find a range of information and guides on offer.

1.8. Money
When travelling overseas we recommend having a variety of ways to access your money, such as debit card, credit card, traveller’s cheques, and cash. Ask your bank if your cards will work overseas and advise them that you are intending to travel so they can remove any international purchase restrictions that may be in place. It’s also a good idea to take a small amount of foreign currency with you, either by purchasing through your bank or Travelex, so you have some local currency if you need to pay for food or transport immediately when you arrive.
Your bank in Australia may also be able to help with recommending banks overseas.
When travelling for an extended period it’s a good idea to make two photocopies of your credit and ATM cards and other valuable documents such as your travel insurance policy, passport and visa. Keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original and leave the other copy with someone at home.

1.9. Overseas Enrolment
You will enrol in a full time study load, which has been pre-approved by your Faculty. Your host institution will provide you on further information on when and how to enrol in your courses.
For most Exchange students, the grade you receive will be a Pass Ungraded or Fail for the courses you study, and these grades will not affect your GPA. The only exception to this is the Italian In-Country and Indonesian In-Country language programs which receive a USC equivalent grade for their studies. Once you successfully pass the courses you have studied overseas, and USC has received your official academic transcript from your host institution, your grades will appear on your USC academic transcript.

1.10. Helpful Tips

→ **Power**

Research the voltage and the plug/socket type of your host country. Australia uses 240V and socket I. It is a good idea to buy a power adapter before you depart so you can charge your electronics once you arrive in your host country. There are universal adapters available that have several country plugs in one adapter.

Below are a few examples of plug/socket types:

- **Australia, China (type I)**
- **Germany (type F)**
- **France, Poland (type E)**
- **Italy (type L)**
- **Europlug (type C)**
- **USA (type A)**
- **USA (type B)**

- Grounding pins, or hole

→ **Read your Host Institutions International Student Guide!!**

This would have to be the best thing for you to do if you haven’t already, as most of the international student guides will be able to provide you with campus maps, transport, accommodation advice, courses and how to enrol, and heaps more!

→ **Research your destination!**

There are plenty of resources online to inform you about what to expect in your host country. Read up on the area, its history, the local customs, and etiquette. Knowing what to expect is a good way to reduce culture shock.

→ **Stay in Touch**

Check with your service provider if your mobile phone has Global Roaming and be sure to turn off your Data Roaming before heading overseas unless you want a huge bill when you return! It’s also a good idea to set up your phone calls to divert to message bank while you’re overseas and set up a recording explaining that you are overseas and advising of an alternative way to contact you. This must be done in Australia before you leave to avoid any hefty charges. Many students choose to get a mobile phone in their host country, which is much cheaper than using your Australian phone. Your host institution will be able to help you find a suitable phone. There are many mobile phone apps available that can help you stay in touch overseas such as WhatsApp, Skype, and Facebook Messenger. Most are also available for your PC/Mac, and if you use Wi-fi at hotspots internet may be free of charge.

→ **Language**
Learning about the local language in your host country can come in very handy when you first arrive in the foreign country. A few useful phrases are ‘Hello’, ‘How are you?’ ‘My name is’, ‘I’m from Australia’, ‘Can you please help me’. At many of our partner institutions you have the option of learning the local language, which is a great way to learn more about the country and traditions. It’s a good idea to read a guidebook and read up on your host country and all it has to offer. The more you immerse yourself in the country and its culture, the more you will get out of this experience.

→ **Student Card**
   It’d a great idea to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before you head overseas. This is the largest internationally recognised discount card for full time students worldwide. You can get discounts on tours, accommodation, food, tourist attractions, and more. Cards can be purchased from most discount travel outlets such as STA and Flight Centre.

→ **Driving**
   Even if you don’t intend to drive when you travel overseas you should always carry an International Driving Permit (IDP). An IDP is a requirement for renting a vehicle in many countries. It is not a stand-alone document and you must also carry your Australian drivers licence with you. IDP’s can be purchased from RACQ, for more information visit the RACQ website: [http://www.racq.com.au/travel/holiday-preparation/international-driving-permits](http://www.racq.com.au/travel/holiday-preparation/international-driving-permits)

→ **Read the Section of Culture Shock**
   Being aware of Culture Shock, the signs and symptoms, is extremely helpful when you are studying overseas. Please read the information in **Section 2.10** of this Guide.

### 2. On Arrival

#### 2.1. Arrival at Host Institution

One of the first things you must do when you arrive at your host institution is contact the International office and main contact person. They will be expecting you and should be ready to help you settle in to your new surroundings.

The next thing is to send the SO Program staff an email ([studyoverseas@usc.edu.au](mailto:studyoverseas@usc.edu.au)) and let them know that you have arrived safely and provide them with your new residential address, email, and phone number. You will also need to update your details on USC Central.

#### 2.2. Emergency Contacts

Please keep the emergency contact numbers for your host country and institution saved in your phone or close at hand. These can often be found in the host institutions international student guide or may be given to you during orientation. These numbers include the Police, Fire, Ambulance, doctor, dentist, and the name of the person you should contact at your host institution if you are in trouble. Please contact USC International if you are involved in an incident on +61 7 5430 2843 or email us [Studyoverseas@usc.edu.au](mailto:Studyoverseas@usc.edu.au) and provide us with your contact number so we can call you back.

#### 2.3. Personal Safety

You can take practical steps to stay safe overseas and avoid running into difficulties and dangerous situations.

- Read the Travel Advice for your destination on the Smart Traveller website
- Register on the Smart Traveller website before you travel
- Subscribe to travel advise on the Smart Traveller website
Make sure your insurance covers your needs
Make two photocopies of your credit and ATM cards and other valuable documents such as your travel insurance policy, passport and visa. Keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original and leave the other copy with someone at home.
Be aware that the safety standards for transport, activities, and accommodation, may not be as high as Australia
You should avoid walking alone after dark or in isolated areas to minimise the risk of harassment. If the dark alley feels creepy, don’t walk down it!
Aim to arrive in an unfamiliar city during the day rather than night
Never leave your luggage unattended or with someone you’ve only just met
Never leave your drink unattended or in the care of a stranger. Drink-spiking is common around the world
Pre-book or pre-arrange all your travel to your host institution so you’re not stuck in transit
Keep your friends and family up to date with what you’re up to and where you are so they know you are safe
Be aware that the customs and culture in your host country may differ from Australia
Never leave your drink unattended or in the care of a stranger. Drink-spiking is common around the world
Always ensure that the door of your room at your accommodation is firmly secured
Violent and petty crimes are present all over the world, so keep your valuables secure and out of sight
Avoid hitchhiking. There are no countries in the world where hitchhiking is safe for women, particularly for women travelling alone.

2.4. Course Changes
If you have any concerns while you’re away regarding your course choices please contact your Faculty. If you arrive and the courses you have been approved for are not offered, or you have a timetable clash, you must contact your Faculty immediately with the outlines of alternative courses. This must be done as soon as you discover a problem so there is enough time to get approval of the new courses and for you to enrol. Once you receive approval of the new courses please advise the SO Program Coordinator (studyoverseas@usc.edu.au).

2.5. Workload
It is a good idea to become familiar with your host institutions style of grading, as it is most likely different to USC’s scale. Most SO students don’t have any trouble adjusting to the international teaching style and academic loads, but if you do become concerned then please contact your Faculty for advice. Keep in mind that you must remain enrolled as a student with a Full-Time study load or you will breach the conditions of your visa and USC Exchange agreement with the host institution.
You must successfully complete your international courses to receive pass grades on your USC academic transcript. If you fail a course it may result in you receiving a Fail grade on your transcript and you will be required to pay back any funding you have received in terms of scholarships or grants.

2.6. Extending your Stay
If you arrive in your host country and decide that you would like to extend your single semester program to a full 2 semesters, then you will need to do the following and gain approval at each step:
1. Ask the SO Coordinator if you are eligible to extend your stay
2. Ask your Faculty if you are eligible to stay another semester and obtain course approvals for the additional courses
3. Ask your Host Institution if they have a place for you

Once you have obtained approval from all three areas you may be able to extend your stay at your host institution.
2.7. Reducing your Stay
If you wish to reduce your overseas study period from two semesters to one semester you will need to contact the SO Coordinator as soon as possible. The SO Coordinator will confirm your reduction with your Faculty and host intuition, but as a matter of courtesy you should contact your host institution and let them know that you will be reducing your stay. Please note that your reduction in stay may affect your credit transfer.

2.8. Re-enrolling at USC
It is highly likely that the USC Enrolment Period for the following semester will open while you are still overseas. It is your responsibility to manage your enrolment and use the resources the University makes available to you in the most effective way. You can enrol in courses the same way you would do it if you were in Australia – via USC Central. If your require assistance enrolling, please contact your Faculty.

2.9. Fees
You will remain enrolled at USC while you are studying overseas on Exchange, which means you continue to pay your tuition fees to USC and don’t pay any tuition fees to your host institution. If you are charged tuition fees please contact your host institutions international office and query the fee, and if they do not resolve it then please contact the SO Coordinator (studyoverseas@usc.edu.au).

You may be charged other types of compulsory student fees such as student service fee, national health insurance fee, etc, and these can’t be waived. You must pay these.

2.10. Culture Shock
Culture Shock is the wide range of emotions you may experience when you head overseas to study. You may find yourself becoming irritable, homesick, anxious, frustrated, unmotivated, feeling culturally isolated, and having difficulty sleeping. There are a wide range of emotions that you may feel and although it doesn’t happen to everyone, it does affect a large group of travellers. The best way you can help yourself adjust to your new environment is to understand that there are stages to Culture Shock, and it will be a matter of mastering them all so you can settle in and enjoy your experience.

Honeymoon Phase (Stage One): This is when you first arrive in your host country and you are really excited and confident about this new adventure and ready to take on everything that is thrown at you. It all seems new, wonderful, and exciting and you are very positive and feel you have control over your life.

Distress Phase (Stage Two): By this stage you are actively interacting with your host countries culture and you have come across unusual or unexpected behaviours. You begin to question your host countries culture and try to compare it to Australia and what you know as familiar. You may become anxious or aware of your behaviour and become confused about how you should behave, opting to withdraw from social interactions. You may feel lonely, homesick, and question your choice to travel overseas.

Adjustment Phase (Stage Three): You start accepting that every country will have different cultures and traditions and you slowly stop comparing your host country to Australia. You begin to understand the culture, history and customs of your new host country and the people within it and begin to feel more at home and comfortable with your surroundings.
Help!

Ways to help overcome Culture Shock include:

- **Very Important** – don’t compare your host country to Australia in a negative way! The sooner you accept that each culture is different, each with its own pros and cons, the better your experience will be. After all, you decided to travel overseas to experience new cultures and broaden your horizons, so embrace it and enjoy the experience.
- **Talk with your friends and family at home.** They will most likely remind you of how excited you were when you left and encourage you to stick it out. The culture shock during your adjustment in your new host country will pass, it will depend on your attitude as to how long it will last.
- **Be proactive and make friends with fellow international students and local students.** Join clubs, societies, and be social!
- **Be flexible and adaptable.** “Control the things you can, and accept the things you can’t”. If you live by this quote you will make your life a lot easier!
- **Don’t be afraid to discuss your feelings with a friend or counsellor at your host intuition.** You are definitely not the first person who has experienced culture shock.
- **Know that this is normal.** Be prepared for the ups and downs and remind yourself that it will pass. Do things that make you happy and help you remain positive.
- **Enjoy being a tourist!** You should have weekends and free days so use them to go explore the country and all it has to offer.

Most people will experience some form of Culture Shock when travelling around the world, but the thing to remember is that once you get through the adjustment period you will come out stronger and more culturally aware which will positively add to your growth as a person.

2.11. Being a USC Ambassador

By participating in the USC SO Program you agree to be an ambassador for USC and USC International. Your conduct overseas will reflect on USC and will impact our agreements with you host institution.

We have explained your role as an ambassador at the compulsory pre-departure session you attended. By signing the Student Pre-Departure Checklist and Declaration you have agreed to abide by USC policy and actively assist USC by promoting the University to prospective students. Once you have settled in to your new surroundings we will be sending you a promotional pack and some information about USC. We may ask you to attend events that are held at your host institution to promote USC.

To help you in your research here are a few Facts about USC, the Sunshine Coast, and Australia.

2.11.1. Facts about USC

- USC is one of Australia’s fastest growing universities, serving the Sunshine Coast and extended region from north Brisbane to the Fraser Coast.
- The University opened in 1996 with 500 students. It was the first Greenfield public university to be established nationally since the early 1970s.
- Today, with around 10,000 enrolled students, USC is on track to reach projected student enrolments of 12,000 by 2015.
- USC offers around 150 undergraduate and postgraduate study programs in business and information technology; communication and design; education; health; humanities and social sciences; and science and engineering.
- Degrees can include elective courses and specialisations across a range of disciplines. Entrepreneurship or sustainability can be studied as part of most degree programs.
- Academic programs are designed with industry to meet regional needs and often include opportunities for work experience, internships and practical industry-based projects.
- The University’s location on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast offers many lifestyle benefits including beautiful beaches and stunning hinterland, a warm climate, and a relaxed and friendly community.
- The campus is located 90km north of Brisbane, Queensland’s capital. Travel to campus is easy with quick access to the Bruce Highway and Sunshine Coast motorway.
• Parking is available on campus (in paid and free parking zones). An on-campus bus interchange, and pedestrian and cycle paths connect the University to surrounding suburbs.

• USC’s campus at Sippy Downs features modern, distinctive architecture and environmentally sensitive design. It has been recognised with more than 30 awards in planning, architecture and construction, and was the first university in Australia to gain full Environmental Development accreditation from the Urban Development Institute of Australia.

• The campus is fully equipped with cafés, an art gallery, award-winning library, bookshop, 24-hour computer laboratories, lecture theatres, and high-tech teaching spaces including science and sports laboratories.

• The sports precinct includes an international-standard athletics track, an indoor sports stadium with gymnasium, and an Olympic-standard swimming pool.

• USC students benefit from a supportive approach and ready access to teaching staff that are highly qualified.

• A full range of support services assist students to overcome challenges to study, and many USC students are from identified equity groups.

• Through USC’s award-winning Global Opportunities Program students can earn credit towards their degree while studying at partner universities around the world. At the same time, about 10 per cent of students come from more than 60 countries to study at USC.

### 2.11.2. Facts about the Sunshine Coast

**Population:** more than 330,000  
**Location:** 90 kilometres north of Queensland’s capital city, Brisbane  
**Features:** warm weather all year round, relaxed lifestyle, natural beauty  
**Temperatures:** 17–28°C in Summer (Dec–Feb), 7–22°C in Winter (June–Aug)

### 2.11.3. Facts about Australia

• Australia’s natural beauty is one of its biggest attractions. The landscape varies from endless sun-baked horizons to tropical rainforests to chilly southern beaches. Its cities blend an enthusiasm for art and food with a love of sport and the outdoors.

• Population density is among the lowest in the world, with an average of 2.5 people per square kilometre – no-one’s within cooee (shouting distance) in the outback. Our population has recently ticked over 23 million. Most people live along the eastern seaboard, with a smaller concentration on the south-western coast. Living in one of the world’s most culturally diverse countries – 23% are foreign-born – Australians incorporate a wide variety of influences into the way they live and play.

If you are unsure about the answer to a question, or if the student has an admission question, encourage students to visit their institutions international office, visit the USC website ([www.usc.edu.au/international](http://www.usc.edu.au/international)), join our Facebook group ([www.facebook.com/uscinternational](http://www.facebook.com/uscinternational)), or contact USC International directly by emailing international@usc.edu.au.

### 2.11.4. Useful Websites

3. Returning to USC
You’ve had a wonderful experience overseas and now it’s time to return to Australia and USC and finish your studies.

3.1. Sharing your experience (USCI SAP)
Once you have arrived back in Australia be sure to come in to USC International and have a chat with us, we’d love to hear about your experiences. Keep in mind that sometimes you can experience reverse culture shock as you adjust to life back home. Just remember that it is temporary and you will soon have your routine in place. Some advice on coping when you return to help with the down after being on such a high is to become involved in the USC International Student Ambassador Program (USCI SAP). Share your stories, photos and knowledge with fellow students that are thinking about going on the SO Program.

When you return to USC, being a USC Ambassador involves attending SO Talks during lectures, attending information sessions, and talking to students who are interested in SO. You will usually be accompanied by a staff member and we encourage you to bring photos of your experience so we can share them with fellow students.

3.2. Academic Transcript
Please ask your Host Institution to send your academic transcript directly to the SO Program Coordinator. They should have the postal address, but if not:

Ilana Boon
University of the Sunshine Coast
USC International
Locked Bag 4
Maroochydore DC, QLD, 4558
AUSTRALIA

Once we receive your transcript we will forward a copy to your Faculty so they can add your credit to your records.

4. Important Contacts
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Consular Emergency Centre
DFAT’s Consular Emergency Centre provides urgent consular assistance around the clock to Australians in distress overseas. The centre’s staff are highly experienced officers who can be contacted on 1300 555 135 from within Australia or on +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas. This service is provided where the problem is serious and requires emergency assistance, and you can’t contact the closest Australian embassy, high commission or consulate.

SO Program
Tel: +61 7 5430 2843 Email: Studyoverseas@usc.edu.au

Faculty of Arts and Business
Tel: +61 7 5430 1259 Email: FABinfo@usc.edu.au

Faculty of Science, Health, Education and Engineering
Tel: +61 7 5430 2869 Email: FosheProgramadvice@usc.edu.au

Student Administration
Tel: +61 7 5430 2890 Email: studentadministration@usc.edu.au
Study Overseas

studyoverseas@usc.edu.au

www.usc.edu.au/studyoverseas