

The ultimate student (and parent!) pre-departure guide.

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thirdyearabroad.com is a free resource of students' articles to help you through studying or working abroad during your degree, so here is our cheat sheet filled with their essential pre-departure advice to help you prepare for your upcoming adventure! They say...

Bureaucracy

The best advice I was given was to get a 40-page plastic document folder and keep all your important photocopies, passport photos and documents there, in one place. Be as organised as you possibly can, because there will be a LOT of paperwork! ...and... "breathe"

Accommodation

Arrive early in your destination to find the best accommodation (with locals!) and make friends before your placement starts. Why not get in touch with UK students who are living there and offer to take their place when they leave? If you're not happy with your flat, then move out asap!

Friends

You are not alone - there are so many others in your situation, so if you spot someone who looks lonely, then talk to them. Take up a new hobby, learn a new skill or work for a charity in your free time so you can meet people with similar interests, and remember that it's ok to spend time with other English people.

Language

Don't worry about making mistakes in your target language. Embrace the embarrassment! You'll learn so much by getting it wrong and being corrected. Keep a notebook for new vocab and write it down as you hear it. I wish I'd thought of making a record of my language skills at the beginning and end of the year so I could see my progress.

Insurance

Purchase travel and emergency medical insurance. Although unis sometimes provide it for free, it won't necessarily cover all destinations or all activities (e.g. skiing, or just holidaying outside semesters). I used it far more than I expected or would have liked to, so it was absolutely invaluable.

Money

Save up at least €1000 before going - I moved to Germany in September and wasn't paid until November, so it's a good thing I saved up! Don't rely too heavily on any grants, and consider using a currency card instead of setting up a foreign bank account, especially if you're only there for a semester.

Phone

I bought a cheap phone with a Pay-As-You-Go SIM card when I arrived, and only used my iPhone through its wi-fi connection. This meant that I wasn't glued to my phone for internet access when I was out and about (a good thing!), but I could still use apps and receive messages from home.

Culture shock

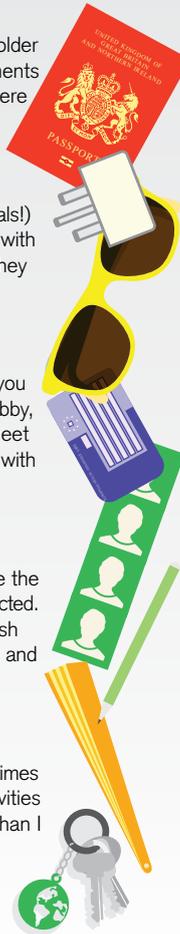
It's okay to have "off days" when you don't really feel like studying or speaking the language at all, but if this becomes a regular thing then something is definitely wrong. If you find yourself Skyping home a lot, then try to resist for a few days and explore instead, so that you have fun stories to report back.

Mental health

Don't rely on your home uni for support. Find local services: whether there's a clinic in your host city, an English-speaking doctor, or an online service, you will get more help from local professionals than from uni staff back home, because it's easier to give personal help face-to-face.

And finally

It's okay not to love every moment you're away. It's really hard. Some days you'll feel like giving up, you'll miss your family and friends immensely and you'll want to get on the next plane back to the UK. Don't. Be proactive, travel where you can and make the most of what you have available to you. It's not every day you have the opportunity to be in another country and see its quirks, fun festivals and big events. Remember that for every day you want to cry, there will be another where you won't stop smiling. I promise! Anything we've missed? Please ask questions on our Q&A site, TYAnswers.com!



While you've heard of us, your parents might not have! Here are some things they should know.

Any questions?

The home university's international office team can't answer your questions about your son or daughter's placement, requirements or progress because of confidentiality issues, so don't call them. Instead, please ask your son/daughter to get in touch with them, or you can always ask general questions on TYAnswers.com, which is for parents too!

Homesickness

Don't forget that your son/daughter will most likely want to get in touch when they feel a bit homesick - this does not mean they are always miserable! Encourage them to blog and get out and about so that they have new and exciting things to write about, while you're kept in the loop!

Insurance

This is so important. Make sure your son or daughter is covered - for holidays and weekend adventures too!

Finances

Using a debit/credit card abroad can incur fees, so currency cards like Caxton FX are a popular alternative. For extra financial support, students may be eligible for the Student Finance Travel Grant and apply for bursaries.

Support

Students who take responsibility for their mobility right from the beginning (e.g. finding accommodation and handling budgets) get the most long-term benefit from it, so encourage their independence! Keep in touch via Skype (free video chat), Whatsapp (free texts) and Viber (free calls) and, if you can, visit your son/daughter near the end of their placement so you get the full benefit of their new tour guide status!

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