

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD)
And
Office of Study Abroad (OSA)

Study Abroad Suggested Procedures for MSU Students with Disabilities
(Non-MSU students with Disabilities should contact Cindy Chalou, Office of Study Abroad at chalouc@msu.edu)

The University strives to provide students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in study abroad programs. In attempting to achieve this goal, the Office of Study Abroad and the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities have established the following guidelines to address issues of processing requests for reasonable accommodation in study abroad programs.

- 1) Encourage Early Disclosure: In order to process a request for reasonable accommodation, students should disclose to OSA and RCPD staff their disability-related requests as far in advance as possible.
- 2) Students with a disability (defined as an impairment that significantly limits or restricts a major life activity such as hearing, seeing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, walking, caring for oneself, or learning) should register with RCPD. Registering will: initiate the disability documentation process; aid students in receiving disability-related information and referrals; provide disability-related technical assistance, auxiliary aids/services, advocacy and training; and facilitate reasonable accommodations.
- 3) Usual processes for study abroad advising of all students, such as encouraging students to attend information sessions, speak with the faculty leader, talk to the academic adviser for course fit, etc. will be followed by OSA staff and peer advisers.
- 4) Once a student has disclosed that he or she has a disability and the student requests an accommodation, the **student meets with a RCPD Specialist** early in the planning process in order to assess the student's disability issues and determine what types of accommodations are recommended, if any. RCPD will communicate with the Office of Study Abroad (OSA) program coordinator (<http://studyabroad.msu.edu/staff.html> staff listing and responsibilities). OSA and RCPD advisers will engage in an interactive dialogue with the student to determine whether accommodations are feasible in connection with particular study abroad programs. While the University may not be legally obligated to provide reasonable accommodations in the study abroad context, it is the goal of OSA and RCPD to provide reasonable accommodations where appropriate and feasible.

- 5) Advisers and students are encouraged to refer to the “*Challenge Yourself: Study Abroad!*” brochure that addresses many disability-related issues in the study abroad context. (<http://studyabroad.msu.edu/download/disabilities.doc>).
- 6) **Encourage Students to Consult Multiple Resources:** It is best for students to identify several programs that meet their academic interests, since sites abroad will have different features and levels of accessibility. If it is available, the students should also consult the information OSA has already gathered on accessibility at various sites abroad. Additional resources include:
 - a) **Access Abroad.** Web: <http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu/abroad/>. This web site was created as part of a federal FIPSE grant to provide information, advising materials, and resources on study abroad for students with disabilities.
 - b) **Mobility International USA.** P.O. Box 10767, Eugene, OR 97440. Phone: (541) 343-1284. Fax: (541) 343-6812. E-mail: clearinghouse@miusa.org. Web: www.miusa.org. This national clearinghouse on disability and exchange provides information and guidance on international exchange opportunities for students with disabilities.
 - c) **A World of Options:** A Guide to International Educational Exchange, Community Service, and Travel for People with Disabilities. This publication provides over 600 pages of information on travel and international programs. Available in OSA Resource Room.
 - d) **Access-Able:** <http://www.access-able.com>
 - e) **Global Access:** <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/1502/>
- 7) **Identify several sites that best suit the student’s capabilities:** Students will be encouraged to learn about the different cultural attitudes towards disability and the differences in access that they may experience while abroad. OSA will attempt to collect specific information on attitudes and access at the particular site abroad and include this in predeparture orientation materials. OSA will attempt to identify a past participant with a similar disability who has studied abroad or a student at the host institution with a similar disability.
- 8) **Student obtains, completes and submits application to Office of Study Abroad.**
- 9) **Student meets with RCPD Specialist to complete a Study Abroad Disability Accommodation Request Form. Only forms completed in consultation with a RCPD Specialist will be accepted.**
- 10) **RCPD faxes (517-432-2082) or e-mails (chalouc@msu.edu) form to OSA.**
- 11) **OSA coordinates collaboration between RCPD Specialist, OSA Coordinator, OSA Assistant Director, MSU program faculty leader (if applicable) and Student to discuss accommodation requests.**

- 12) OSA Contacts the Site Abroad:** Once a student's accommodation needs are known, OSA contacts the site(s) abroad or sponsoring agency (if a non-MSU program) to determine what possibilities exist. Since accessibility information may not exist for a particular site, OSA may need to contact several sites abroad to determine accommodation possibilities. Once a suitable site has been identified, OSA clarifies in writing for all parties what accommodations can be provided and who the contact person on-site will be for the student. Additionally, the participating student is encouraged to independently investigate disability information about the site abroad in order to identify additional resources.
- 13) OSA and RCPD Determine Cost:** In many cases there may be no cost involved in providing accommodations, such as extended time on exams. If there is a cost involved in providing accommodations to the student, OSA and RCPD will collaborate to determine who is responsible for these expenses.
- 14) RCPD Provides a Letter** of introduction and explanation of accommodation needs for the student to give to the party responsible for on-site arrangements.
- 15) Assess On-Site Requests:** If additional accommodation needs arise while the student is abroad, OSA and the student will discuss these needs with RCPD and the site abroad to determine whether the additional accommodations are reasonable and appropriate.

If a student does not disclose the disability-related needs until abroad, the site abroad, OSA, and RCPD will need to determine whether accommodations are possible. Students are urged to disclose their needs well in advance of their departure date to allow sufficient time to assess whether accommodations can be made. It may not be feasible to act on accommodation requests made too close to the date of departure or once on site.
- 16) Gather Feedback for Future Students:** Upon the student's return, OSA and RCPD will gather disability access and accommodation information from the student and the site abroad about the student's experiences and identify any suggestions that should be conveyed to future students.