

# Tips for Maximizing your Study Away Experience at a Foreign “Direct Enroll” University

As you have already gleaned in the application and preparation processes, because you are participating in a direct enroll program, you will be an independent student for your study away semester. We offer you these suggestions as you look forward to leaving:

First, we strongly encourage you to connect with other Macalester students who have attended your university in a recent semester, if you have not already done so. You might ask:

- What do they wish they had known ahead?
- What suggestions can they give you for a smooth trip and transition?
- What lessons did they learn from which you can benefit?

Planning your arrival details:

- You will be on your own as you enter the country of destination, so:
  - You may want to ask your study away advisor for a “sponsor” letter for the port-of-entry.
  - Be sure you take any other required documents as listed on your university’s website.
  - Be sure your passport is stamped for you as a student, not just a visitor.
- Plan ahead for your ground travel arrangements. You will be on your own getting to your university.
- Reread any and all advice on the website on what to bring and in the last minute emails regarding your housing arrangements and arrival. While technology is great, you may want to print off any details that are specific to you.
- Be sure to take along -- and utilize -- phone numbers of your contacts at the university; they are there to assist you.

Once you arrive:

- Be your own advocate as you navigate the bureaucracy and the new setting.
- Ask questions, and then ask again. Don’t hesitate to ask as much as you need to until you learn the ropes, but as a guest in another country, please remember to be polite and patient with different timetables, other ways of conducting academic business, classes and support services.
- Attend orientation! As a visiting individual student, this is your one chance to meet your support contacts and others in the same position you are.
- Get involved in what interests you from the university offerings (and/or student center):
  - dorm life
  - campus clubs or organizations
  - campus sports
  - opportunities for community service
  - local or extended excursions
  - services and/or other religious functions

Not only will this provide you the experiences of immersion in the local campus culture, this is your chance to make friends early among local and other international students.

## Foreign “Direct Enroll” University, cont.

- If you have to make changes in your schedule, stay in contact with Macalester's Registrar, and your academic advisor(s) here on campus via your Mac email.
- Be flexible and open to a different type of higher education experience than you are used to:
  - various teaching methods and discussion experiences
  - different grading policies and criteria
  - far more independent-study type course expectations
  - ask and observe how local students succeed
  - explore the new resources available to you
  - don't forget to ask for assistance
- Stretch the boundaries of your comfort zone and alter your expectations as needed:
  - rather than just travelling away every chance you get, spend some weekends on campus participating in campus culture opportunities
  - start reading/watching/listening to local media
  - attend local concerts and visit nearby museums and other attractions
  - forge relationships with local peers
- If you get discouraged:
  - being so independent can be overwhelming; give yourself time to adjust
  - connect with someone else in your situation and, again, talk to other students who have previously participated in direct enroll programs and ask what they did
  - know yourself, your limitations, and your coping strategies — plan ahead
  - don't hesitate to access your campus support and local mental health services
  - reach out to your allies at home and Mac as appropriate

Remember, while studying away, you are still a Mac student and our staff is here to support you too.