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Off-Campus Studies: Best Practices

Houghton College desires that all students have the opportunity to study abroad. However, we also recognize that any particular off-campus studies option may not be an ideal fit for you as a student. Since most students will only have one opportunity for off-campus study, we encourage you to use careful consideration when making a choice. Thus the purpose of this document is to help you to evaluate the options and your needs in your decision process. Study Abroad by its nature includes additional stressors and challenges. The demands on your mental and physical well-being are greater than being on campus. While you may desire to participate in a particular option, it may not be recommended and HC reserves the right to not approve your selection of a study abroad option if it is deemed in your best interest based on your needs. Through advising with your academic advisor; your support network including counseling, Academic Support, Student life, Residential life, medical providers; and the Off-Campus Studies office we ask that you take into consideration all of the following that could present limitations to your success and enjoyment of an option.

1. Academic considerations

- How well do the course offerings fit with your academic plan, major, and with HC course rotations?
- Is the level of academics required for the course work appropriate to your educational goals and needs.

2. Personal characteristics

- Is your choice the best for you? For example some options require higher levels of independence and “going it alone” while others are more community oriented.
- Do you understand your personality? Host cultures vary and students find that their personalities may fit better in a particular context or make adjustment harder.

3. Dietary needs and choices. It is not always possible for special dietary needs to be met.

- Do you have food allergies that could be staple foods in other countries? (Wheat, for example.)
- Do you have personal dietary restriction or choices that are difficult to fulfill? Examples include but are not limited to vegan, gluten free, and lactose intolerance.

4. Special needs accommodations

- Do you normally have academic needs accommodations? These are not always available.
- Do you have physical needs accommodations? Laws and accommodations vary greatly in countries leaving many things out of Houghton’s or the provider’s control.

Houghton College cannot guarantee that accommodations can be met by a provider or within a given country. Discussing these needs ahead of time is essential. Attempts to offer reasonable accommodations will be made.

5. Medical care

- Do you have a medical condition that may require special care? While basic medical care is always available, not all sites have advanced medical care.
- Do you take routine medications? Medications are not always available and provision for this has to be addressed.

6. Mental health care

- Do you have support needs, including but not limited to counseling for mental health, access to support lines or networks?

Given the nature and location of off-campus options, support levels vary and in many places these types of support are not available. In some places there is not adequate phone or internet service to access 24 hour hotlines.

The Off-Campus Studies Office will be glad to help you with any questions that you may have and will work with you to get answers and help make the best choice possible. While students have been highly successful with off-campus study, we want to empower you to make the best choice possible. It is our desire to facilitate your success in relation to your choice and knowing your needs ahead of time is the best way to know if a particular option will work for you.

Please note that in order to best facilitate your desired Off-Campus studies option it is your responsibility to fully disclose your needs. Failure to self-disclose in relation to any of the above, or other needs, may lead to non-approval for study abroad, or could place you at risk of not being able to complete the study option, including early return.

Self-Disclosure: I agree that I will fully disclose with the program director and/or the OCS office regarding any needs that I have. I also consent that the OCS office can forward my name to the following offices so that they can work with me to discuss my needs and possible support: The Counseling Center, the Dean of Students, Academic Accommodations, and the Medical Center.

Name (Print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____