UNC Study Abroad is committed to facilitating access to study abroad programs for students with academic accommodations, mobility concerns, and serious medical conditions, including mental and physical health concerns. Whether you are currently registered with Accessibility Resources and Services or not, please don't hesitate to email or schedule an appointment with the Advisor for Access to talk about accessible programs or about preparing for your time abroad. Additional information about study abroad for students registered with ARS is available on the ARS website.

Follow these helpful steps to study abroad so that the Advisor for Access can best work with you to help you have a healthy and successful experience abroad:

Steps to Study Abroad

**STEP 1: PLANNING STUDY ABROAD AND CHOOSING A PROGRAM**
Before deciding on a study abroad program, it could be helpful to meet with the Advisor for Access to talk about different aspects of accessibility abroad:

- **Physical accessibility of study abroad destinations** *(Ex. I use a power wheelchair. How can I get around a foreign city?)*
  - Within the university (housing, classrooms, etc.)
  - Within the city (public transportation, travel to/from the airport, etc.)
- **Reasonable accommodations abroad** *(Ex. Can I receive the same academic accommodations abroad that I receive at UNC?)*
  - Learning style and assessment methods abroad
- **Health resources abroad** *(Ex. I see a mental health counselor here. How can I find a therapist abroad?)*
  - Finding local doctors and scheduling appointments
  - Obtaining prescription medication
  - Using the GeoBlue Students website to locate country-specific health information (if applicable)
- **Other support abroad**

**STEP 2: IDENTIFYING YOUR NEEDS ABROAD**
Once you have selected a study abroad program, you should determine your daily needs while abroad. After you have enrolled in a program, the Advisor for Access can work with you and your host institution to set up reasonable accommodations or health resources abroad. This may include:

- **Academic accommodations** for students registered with ARS
- Mental health counseling
- Medical assistance for chronic medical problems (arranging doctor visits or regular medical treatment)
- Housing (private or wheelchair-accessible rooms)
- Meal options in university dining halls or host families for students with food allergies
- Personal support abroad (personal assistant or guide for students with physical or visual impairments, service or support animals)
- Means of transportation
STEP 3: PREPARING FOR YOUR STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

In order to best prepare for your study abroad program, make sure to follow these steps:

• **Disclose your needs to the Advisor for Access:** To officially request accommodations abroad or to ask for help in locating services or in managing a health condition or disability abroad, you can either schedule an appointment or email the Advisor for Access with detailed information about your needs. Students registered with ARS who are seeking academic accommodations abroad should send the ARS accommodations notification used for UNC professors to the Advisor for Access.

• **Disclose your needs to local staff:** If your study abroad program or host university has a disability or health form associated with your application, fill out this form as honestly and thoroughly as possible. List any serious academic, mobility or health concerns, including allergies (food or otherwise).

• **Talk about your study abroad plans with your doctors:** If you have physical or mental health concerns that require regular medical visits, treatment or monitoring, please discuss your study abroad plans with your doctor well in advance of your departure so that they know the demands of your program and can advise you on how best to practice self-care while abroad.

• **Make sure your medications are legal abroad:** If you take medication on a regular basis, you will need to verify the legality of your medication on the website for your host country’s embassy in the U.S. This OSAC article on traveling with medication could also be helpful.

• **Bring an ample supply of medication with you:** If you take medication on a regular basis, ask your physician for a prescription of your medication to last you for the entire duration of your study abroad program if possible, and bring the full supply of medication abroad with you. Make sure to keep all medication in its original packaging and to carry your prescription or a doctor’s note with you in case you are questioned at immigration. Lastly, don’t forget to pack any vital medications in your carry-on bag rather than in your checked luggage.

• **Bring any relevant medical documentation with you:** Make sure to bring with you any medical documentation related to your accommodations or health concerns, including doctor’s letters. This documentation may be required by your host university in order to set up academic accommodations.

• **Use your health insurance and print your insurance card!** Log into the GeoBlue Students website (if applicable for your program) using the login information received via email prior to departure, and print your insurance card! Use the other tools available on the GeoBlue website to look up drug equivalencies, recommended vaccinations, and translation of medical terms, as well as to identify local hospitals, doctors and pharmacies.

• **Translate your medical needs:** Translate your medical condition and needs into the local language before you go abroad, and carry a health card with you in your wallet. It could be particularly helpful to make an allergy card in the local language to note allergies to food, medication or the environment.

• **Check your technology:** Verify that any technology that you use regularly is in working order before going abroad, and research where you can get replacement parts or repairs for your technology abroad.

• **Costs:** Investigate whether your accommodation needs may require additional expenditures abroad, and research ways to support these costs. Know that any financial aid and scholarships that you currently receive at UNC during the academic year travel with you abroad, and don't hesitate to reach out to the Advisor for Access for help with finding funding!

• **Make a self-care plan!** Think about your day-to-day needs and how you will manage them abroad, and create a self-care plan. Don't forget to develop a contingency plan for what to do if you have a medical emergency abroad.

STEP 4: AFTER ARRIVING IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY

You've arrived abroad, now what should you do?

• **Check in with the Disability office at your host institution!** It is always best to make a connection with the Disability office at your host institution as soon as possible after arriving in country. If your study abroad program doesn't have a Disability office, check in with the primary on-site contact for the program about accommodations abroad. This is especially important as many institutions require an in-person assessment in order to finalize accommodations for study abroad students.

• **Use your health insurance!** Use the GeoBlue Students website or your healthcare provider’s website for any medical needs – to locate doctors abroad, to submit claim forms for reimbursement of medical expenses, or to locate country-specific health resources, including local hospitals.

• **Contact us:** Don't hesitate to reach out to the Advisor for Access or to ARS if you have any questions or concerns while abroad!
Considerations to Keep in Mind

• **Your health is ultimately your responsibility!** It is your responsibility to be aware of your own health condition and concerns, and to disclose any necessary information to the Advisor for Access as well as to local program staff and professors. We will be able to more effectively support you while abroad if you choose to disclose academic, mobility or health concerns, although you are not required to do so.

• **Early disclosure:** We encourage you to disclose any academic or health concerns to the Advisor for Access early in the study abroad process so that we can set up reasonable accommodations and locate health resources abroad well in advance of your arrival.

• **Full disclosure:** It is important to be as candid as possible with the Advisor for Access, with local on-site staff, and with your family and doctors back home about your accessibility or health concerns so that we can all work together to ensure that you have a successful experience abroad.

• **Reasonable academic accommodations:** While we will do our best to arrange comparable academic accommodations for you abroad, standards for reasonable accommodations vary by country and in some cases, we may not be able to arrange abroad the exact accommodations that you receive here at UNC. However, we will do our best to find solutions that work for you academically to allow you to have a successful experience abroad. After reaching out to your host institution abroad, the Advisor for Access will let you know if any adjustments need to be made for your accommodations and can propose alternative strategies to accommodate your specific needs. Keep in mind that flexibility is key when traveling abroad!

• **Differing perceptions of and services for disability abroad:** Perceptions of disability and support to persons with disabilities may be different in other countries. Depending on your needs, some study abroad destinations may be better equipped than others to host study abroad students with disabilities based on infrastructure and local laws governing disability. Bear in mind that accessibility and support services may not be available in certain destinations, or they may be provided differently abroad.

• **Do your research!** Research your host culture and how disability is treated within your host culture before you go so that you know what to expect. Mobility International is a great tool, as are previous students who have studied abroad in your host country! See the Resources section below for more information on studying abroad for students with disabilities.

• **Studying abroad is both a challenging and rewarding experience.** Changes in environment, diet, sleep, and lifestyle when living abroad can lead to increased stress and might have an impact on your physical and mental wellbeing. Practice self-care strategies, regularize your schedule, and be patient with yourself! Everyone has good and bad days while studying abroad, and being adaptable and open to differences is critical to successfully navigating culture shock and challenges abroad.

Available Resources

Check out these websites for detailed information about accessibility abroad:

- [Mobility International](#)
- **U.S. State Department:** [Country Information](#) pages, “Local Laws & Special Circumstances” section
- **U.S. State Department:** [Traveling with Disabilities](#)
- **Diversity Abroad:** [Students with Disabilities Abroad](#)
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- **University of Minnesota:** Helpful country- and university-specific accessibility information