

International Engineering Minor
College of Engineering and Computer Science

Pre-Departure Orientation

So, You think You're Ready?

- Got your coursework approved!
- Got your apartment/dorm room reserved!
- Got your airline ticket!
- Got your passport!
- Got your Visa!
- Got your camera!

- So, off you go, right?



Wrong!

- You still have to listen to me for the next hour or so.
- Why put you through this pain?



Why?

- We want to be sure that you know what to expect
 - Living abroad is not the same as spending a week abroad in a hotel while on vacation
 - ... far different!!!
- What you do or don't do in the classroom will inevitably affect your grades back here at UCF.
- What you do in and out of the classroom will also reflect on the USA, on UCF, on your fellow students, on our staff members and on the faculty.



Things are different there!

- One of the joys of studying abroad is the learning about a new culture.
- Many things are different. For example:
- Read out loud the following number:

176,25

- If someone asks you how many beers you want and you need to respond three using hand signals in Germany, how would you do it?

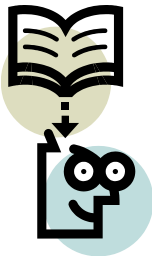
It's Study Abroad – NOT Party Abroad

- You're going on this study abroad experience primarily for your education.
 - It is an academic experience!
- Enjoy your experience, have fun and take advantage of the opportunity
 - ... but study.
- We expect academic excellence from you!
 - While at UCF ...
 - ... but specially while abroad



What to expect: Coursework

- Classes abroad are different than in the US
- In most foreign universities, grades are based solely on the final exam.
 - No tests, no quizzes, no homework assignments, no reports, no class presentations, no projects ... no nothing!
 - However, sometimes you can take the final exam more than once, typically, at no penalty
- No one will force you to keep up and attend classes through the entire semester.
 - Open loop control system – no feedback!



What to expect: Meeting locals

- You will be placed mostly with other international students, specially those of you going to Europe.
 - European students do much study abroad (except the Brits, for some strange reason)
 - They have the Erasmus Mundus program that encourages and funds such experiences
- Unfortunately, your contact with natives may be limited, especially at the beginning
- You will need to make an effort to meet locals.



What to expect: Faculty

- Faculty in foreign institutions are generally less accessible and less approachable than UCF faculty.
- A full Professor in Europe and Asia is a minor deity
 - There are exceptions, of course (such as my friends)
 - Typically they have assistants to do the heavy lifting.
- So, don't be surprised and be ready to deal with it.
 - No consumerism there
 - Be respectful!
 - But most of all, be patient



What to expect: Living Arrangements

- Living arrangements will probably be roughly equivalent to what you have in the US ...
 - ... but maybe not!
- We've never had any complaints about this before.
- I've personally inspected many of the student housing in several places ...
 - ... but if your living quarters are not habitable according to our standards, for whatever reason, ... let us know and we'll try to help.
 - ... although no guarantees!



What to expect: Living Arrangements

- Start with the international department group and complain there.
 - Be sure not to offend!
- There are limited things we can do ...
 - ... but we can try.
- If all else fails, call or email me. I have some contacts ...
 - ... but can't promise anything.
- I repeat, the chances of this happening are very small.



What to expect: Registration

- Registration can be chaotic in some locations
 - Brazil being the best example of that.
- If the courses you have approved to take there ...
 - ... have been closed to you but are still being offered, please contact us and we'll see what we can do.
 - ... are cancelled/never offered in the first place, our options are quite a bit more limited.
- Let me know what courses ARE being offered and we can try to get them approved.
 - Been there, done that!
- Most of all, be patient!

What to expect: Laws

- The laws of other countries are NOT our laws.
- You are bound by their laws, not ours!!!
 - Some may be different!
 - In Singapore, chewing gum in public is cause for incarceration!
 - In others (e.g., China, Russia), you cannot openly speak against the government.
 - In Spain, taking photos while running the bulls in Pamplona is also cause for incarceration
 - I know that firsthand!

What to expect: Laws

- In Europe and Japan, Police are to be trusted – at least as much as in the US.
 - Can't say the same for other countries.
- Please avoid going to jail at all costs!
 - Please!!!
- If you do, you are on your own!
 - We cannot bail you out!



What to expect: US Embassy

- You are advised to check in with the US Embassy (or consulate) and let them know you're there studying.
 - May be helpful in case of natural disaster, political crisis or medical emergency.
 - Or if you end up in jail
 - but you won't, right?

What to expect: Illness

- You should have some sort of medical insurance while abroad.
 - Preferably, provided by the host government or the university
- Healthcare in most of Europe and Japan is public and generally excellent.
- In most other countries, it is reasonably good in the big cities, not so much in the countryside.
- If you become ill, your first source of help should be the host university.
 - Please become familiar with the resources there and the emergency telephone numbers upon arrival there.

What to Expect: Safety

- Two types of dangers: 1) crime, 2) political instability, 3) terrorism
- Most of Europe and Japan are very safe - compare to the US in terms of the first two.
- Latin America is a mixed bag – some places are very dangerous from crime, others are not so bad.
 - Political instability is a concern in Latin America, but not as much as before. Venezuela is an exception
- Africa in general is VERY dangerous on all three counts .
- Same for the Middle East, especially for Americans

What to Expect: Safety

- Nevertheless, regardless of where you are, there are criminals ... even in Europe and Japan!
 - Their crime rates are NOT zero!
 - Many pickpockets, in Europe especially.
- If a location and/or people start looking suspicious, listen to your inner alarm!
 - Get out of there

What to Expect: Safety

- Don't do anything stupid!
 - Don't go into shady neighborhoods, especially not at night
 - Walk in groups
 - Go with locals who know the scene
 - Don't show off laptops, jewelry, ipads, iphones, etc.
 - Don't show off a wad of bills in a public place
 - Don't use open automatic tellers. Go to ones inside banks.
 - Guys: put wallet in front pocket or in money belt in crowded places
 - Ladies: use small purses and hang on them tightly
 - No need to keep passport with you (except in China) . Keep a color photocopy.
 - In fact, make several copies, one for your wallet, another one in the apartment and a third with your family back home.

Terrorism

- We never used to have to worry about this
 - But now ... ☹️
- Should be on your mind all the time, especially those going to Europe/Australia.
 - Less of a concern for Latin America and Asia
- First of all, avoid large public gatherings if possible, as these are the prime (but not the only) targets.
- Second, look around you for things that seem strange. Walk away and if possible, report it.

Terrorism

- If you find yourself in the middle of a firefight, hit the ground and play dead.
- If you are in the surrounding area of a terrorist attack but not in the firefight, three things to do.
 - Run – head for the exits. One caveat, however.
 - Hide – Under tables, desks, etc.
 - Fight back – if all fails and you are facing an attacker, fight back. It's your only chance at that point.

Terrorism

- This is why it is very important to check in with the US embassy or consulate when you arrive.
- In case of an attack in the city or town, check in with us right after you have checked in with the US embassy and your parents.

What to Expect: Being American

- In general, Americans are either loved or hated all over the world.
 - Very little in between
- Locals will know that you are American, regardless of how hard you try to melt away in the crowd.
 - How you dress
 - How you carry yourself
 - Your language, your hand gestures, etc.
- Do not get into political or cultural arguments with people you don't know well.

Staying in Touch

- We want to know how you're doing while you're there
- I love to get update emails from students abroad - good and bad
- Keep a blog!
- Let us know how you're doing in the classes – good or bad.
- We can try to help you resolve any issues that may come up.

What to expect: Summary!

- OK, now that I've psyched you out,
 - Study hard
 - Have fun
 - But ... be careful!
 - Use common sense.



Advising

Maintain contact throughout the semester and check your Knights mail account daily!

Email:

- * We will email you during the first week of classes
- * Notify me of any changes to your schedule
- * Notify me of any issues that may arise while abroad—academic or other
- * I will be in contact throughout the semester
- * Respond to emails in a timely manner

Expectations

You are a UCF Ambassador—your actions reflect on UCF as a whole!

- Golden Rule Student Handbook
<http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/docs/GoldenRule.pdf>
- Academic Performance

Once you're home...

- Debriefing Survey
- Grades
- Check you degree audit once grades are posted
- Make sure all requirements for the minor have been met—cultural/language courses, GPA, minor declaration
- **Tell other Knights about your experience!**
 - We'll need you at future information sessions and pre-departure sessions

Academics

- Required International Engineering Minor
GPA – 2.75
- What if you don't do well academically?
 - Financial Consequences – Grant, scholarship, Bright Futures
 - No Minor
 - Major GPA
 - May have to repeat some courses
 - In extreme cases, probation and/or expulsion

Other Students' Experiences

- Number 1 problem encountered abroad:
Academic Shock
- "Don't underestimate the difficulty of the courses."
- "The academic culture was very different."
- "Keep tabs on your schedule . . . Schedules are erratic."
- "My only real problems were with my classes and professors."

Things You May Not Know...

- You may have to register for your exams
- Your final exam may be your only grade in the class
- You may never get feedback from your professors
- You may not actually be registered in the classes you think you are

In Spite of all This...

- When asked “Would you recommend your colleagues (that’s you!) to study abroad in the host country/host university?” **every single student** who studied abroad in Spring 2012 answered **“YES!”**

Questions?

