



**A Learning Agreement
between
Columbia College/ Fu Foundation for Engineering & Applied
Sciences**

and

Participant's name (print)

Program or institution abroad

Columbia advocates and supports undergraduate study abroad as one of the most important ways by which our students can prepare themselves for the challenges of global citizenship in the 21st century. By recognizing and facilitating your initiative to study abroad, Columbia makes the assumption that you – as an individual – are seeking to build skills that will enrich you intellectually as well as serve you in your future career.

Our purpose in making the opportunity to study abroad available to you is , broadly stated, to expose you to new and different perspectives on knowledge and the socio-economic contexts, languages, traditions and cultural assumptions that give rise to them. Columbia emphasizes whenever possible deep immersion in the host culture for a significant period of time and your individual responsibility first, to prepare for learning abroad and, thereafter, to seek out and profit from every learning moment that presents itself.

The following document constitutes a compact between you and Columbia College or the Fu Foundation for Engineering and Applied Sciences. I ask you to read and sign this compact which outlines Columbia's philosophy regarding study abroad, its expectations of your behavior, and its official policies constituted by the Faculty Committee on Instruction. In signing the compact, you agree to carry out your studies abroad in a manner consistent with the philosophy, expectations and policies of Columbia.

Kathleen McDermott
Director, Global Programs

I indicate by my signature below that I have read and understand the attached statements and that I commit myself to observing these policies and expectations regarding my participation in study abroad.

Signature

Date

Please return to 204 Lewisohn before you leave for your host country

A Learning Agreement between the *Student Participant* and Columbia College/Fu Foundation for Engineering and Applied Sciences.

(Retain this document for your reference)

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LEARNING ATTITUDE

A successful study abroad experience hinges almost entirely on your positive predisposition to learn in an unfamiliar academic and social system. It is not expected that you will understand everything immediately. What is expected is your personal investment of hard work and your open-minded attitude.

We hope you will be an eager and willing learner. You are encouraged to take a proactive approach to learning and to engage voluntarily in learning activities that complement the formal curriculum and that will reinforce your language and cultural skills. We encourage you to be respectful of your hosts and their culture, and to be mindful of customs which may be sometimes different from yours.

You are advised to distance yourself as much as you can from other students from American universities. Given the structures of some types of study abroad, it may be very difficult to distance yourself physically from other U.S. students, but you should make a conscious effort to do so in your mind. Successful study abroad is essentially an individual growth experience that can be hindered by too much reliance on group identity. Staying in a group is often a barrier to integration into local society and therefore reduces opportunities for your basic cultural assumptions to be challenged

Just as at Columbia, you are expected to attend class regularly, to come prepared and to participate actively in classroom discussion. Absence from a class can be excused normally only for a legitimate medical reason. Absence from classes or other scheduled activities due to personal travel or visitors, including family, is not acceptable under any circumstances.

PREPARATION FOR STUDY ABROAD

The Study Abroad Office provides pre-departure preparation programming that is designed to ease your adaptation to living and studying abroad. You are expected to attend *any and all* pre-departure orientation meetings that may be held to brief you about your program or university abroad. Important information is provided at these meetings and it is assumed that you will give them your highest priority.

You must take a regional course about the country where you will be studying and, if appropriate, the language of the host country the semester before going abroad. In addition to this, you are expected to make yourself as well-informed as possible about the history and traditions of the people who will be your hosts by devoting personal time to reading, seeing films, practicing your language skills informally and other similar activities. We at Columbia are very fortunate to have Regional Institutes that host talks and brown bag lunches about most of the countries where students plan to study. Our International Students and Scholars Office also offers opportunities to meet international students and to join in some of their activities.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

You are reminded that good physical health and emotional stability are very important to your academic performance and successful study abroad experience. It is your responsibility to report any health concerns so that appropriate steps may be taken to ensure your ability to study abroad. All students must travel abroad with adequate health insurance.

ADAPTING TO LOCAL CONDITIONS AND CUSTOMS

You are expected to demonstrate a willingness to adapt to local study and living conditions. It is assumed that by seeking to study abroad, you realize many things will be different from what you are used to and that you will be ready and willing to cope with the differences you will encounter, even when this is difficult or inconvenient.

You are herewith forewarned that in many sites, even in countries with developed economies, you should not assume you will find the conveniences and comforts of life in New York or your home. Examples of differences to which you will need to adapt may be: long commuting distances between accommodations and classes; lack of privacy in accommodations; restrictions on heating and/or water usage; absence of or lack of easy access to a telephone or restricted telephone usage; lack of a smoke-free environment; lack of easy access or no access to word processing and/or electronic mail; unfamiliar food that you do not like or you perceive as unhealthy.

A very important part of the study abroad experience is your learning to cope with these differences. Columbia generally expects you to make this effort. Columbia does not make it a practice to intervene with local authorities on behalf of students who are having initial difficulties in adapting unless there are legitimate reasons to do so. If you have a health condition or other circumstances which may require special attention, you are responsible for making this known to the Office of Global Programs before going abroad. You must be sure to alert us about any special study or living requirements you may have, so that steps can be taken to meet your special need, if possible, in the context of local conditions.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

You are an ambassador of Columbia University and of American higher education, and you are expected to represent these institutions honorably. You are expected to strive for academic excellence abroad just as you do at home.

Whenever possible, Columbia emphasizes immersion in a university setting alongside regular degree candidates from the host country. You are expected to duplicate as much as possible the experience of the host country student, and Columbia expects the host institution to teach you and evaluate you according to the same standards it applies to its own regular degree candidates. You should expect to encounter different teaching styles and to have to adapt to different academic expectations. You should not be surprised if your grades are not as high as you are used to getting at home, particularly if you have trouble adapting to new academic expectations. When it comes to your final grade, be careful not to confuse your hard effort with your actual performance judged objectively. You should try to remember that your goal is to build knowledge and competence.

Columbia also emphasizes foreign language study abroad, in full immersion settings wherever possible. If you are in an American sponsored program (instead of direct enrollment in the local university) you are expected to study in the host country language and to take at least two courses in the local university. We also expect you to try and use the language as much as possible outside the classroom. It is a matter of courtesy to use the host language in your routine daily activities like shopping and using public transportation. Your progress in achieving greater foreign language fluency is entirely in your hands and requires effort and practice.

Before going abroad, you are expected to have made good progress towards your degree and to have worked with your major department on courses that you can take in your major abroad. It is a goal of the Columbia Study Abroad program that students integrate their studies abroad with their Columbia studies as much as possible.

Remember that excessive traveling is likely to interfere with the important goals of study abroad. Travel fatigue may affect your academic performance, and traveling also hinders your ability to meet people and immerse yourself in the rhythms of your local setting. You are expected to observe a five-day workweek and to undertake long distance travel only during scheduled breaks or holidays.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic performance prior to study abroad:

You must be in good academic standing with at least a 3.0 gpa. Some Universities and Programs may set higher minimum gpa standards that must be met. You may not study abroad with an incomplete.

Credit:

In order to receive credit your courses must be approved by the Office of Global Programs. Most students change their courses once they arrive in the host country, so the final list of courses must be approved once you are abroad and ready to register. Your department will approve major credit upon your return but you should discuss your courses with your major advisor before going abroad. Please bring back all course work and syllabi for your

department. You must take a normal course load of the host country, which usually translates to 15 or 16 points. You cannot take less or more than this without permission from the Office of Global Programs.

Internships:

You may earn credit for an academic internship with the permission of the Office of Global Programs and applicable departmental faculty. In order to receive credit for an internship, there must be an academic seminar attached to the internship and you must complete a written end-of-term paper or study.

Grades:

All courses must be taken for a letter grade- You may not take classes Pass/fail. While your grades are not integrated into your Columbia gpa, you must receive at least a C- in order to receive credit. You should note that most professional schools, some graduate departments, fellowship applications and even some employers ask for a copy of your Study Abroad transcript.

Unfinished Work:

You are expected to complete all assigned work and exams before leaving the study abroad site at the end of the semester or year. You must have written permission from the Office of Global Programs to leave a site before completing all of your academic obligations.

PERSONAL CONDUCT AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are required to observe the laws of the country in which you are studying abroad and all academic and disciplinary regulations in effect at the host institution. While you are studying abroad, you remain concurrently enrolled as a degree candidate at Columbia University and, consequently, continue to be subject to Columbia's policies on student behavior and academic integrity. You may be expelled from your study abroad program for violation of these codes and/or for academic failure or disciplinary disturbances. Misconduct of any kind will be referred to the student's Class Center.

A FINAL COMMENT: WHY IS THE STUDY ABROAD LEARNING AGREEMENT NECESSARY?

Study abroad will constitute from 12% to 25% of your undergraduate time at Columbia and will continue to have a profound impact on your studies when you return. You cannot afford to waste a moment of this precious learning time. Unlike your time on campus in a highly supervised learning environment, when you study abroad, the responsibility for staying on course is primarily on you. For most of you, this is the time when you will mature emotionally and intellectually at the greatest speed. This compact serves as a guide to steer you toward successful skill building and to steer you away from academic tourism. We want you to know how seriously Columbia considers education abroad as an extension of our education programs at home.

Good luck on the adventure you are about to undertake! We look forward to welcoming you back to Columbia and to having you share your rich experiences with your fellow students and teachers.