

IDENTITY ABROAD HANDBOOK

Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)

Toronto
Metropolitan
University

Global
Learning

Toronto, Canada





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1. Students With Disabilities

When traveling abroad, it's important to know that perceptions of and accommodations for disability will vary. The key to any global learning participant is flexibility. Accommodations may be different in each country. However, many institutions are increasingly offering accommodations for students with both visible and invisible disabilities.

We encourage you to communicate your needs to our office, your activity organizer, and/or the [Academic Accommodation Support office](#) as soon as possible. This will provide us with the opportunity to assess which programs may be a good fit for you and explore available avenues to ensure that your particular needs are met.

To help you learn more about global learning abroad for students with disabilities, we've compiled the information and resources below. The goal of these resources is to ensure you can make an informed decision about global learning abroad. As you navigate the material, feel free to reach out to us at any point in time. In addition, the [MastersDegree.net](#) resource, Guide to Studying Abroad for Students with Disabilities is an excellent step-by-step guide (see below for additional resources).

PARTICIPATION TIPS

- Disclose your disability needs to program staff early, so appropriate arrangements and reasonable accommodations can be made in advance.
- Remember that other cultures may provide disability access in a different way, learn about what types of accommodations are typically provided in your host country and be prepared to advocate for the accommodations that you require.
- Before you go, find out as much as you can about your destination culture and how they view disability by reading, talking to other students from the region or who have experience travelling in the region (this may include reaching out to students from other universities who have a similar disability and have travelled in the area, for example, those who have shared their experiences on one of the platforms below), and attending pre-departure orientation sessions. The more you know, the better prepared you will be for the new environment.
- Consider how you will ask for accommodations once you arrive in the destination country. You may encounter situations that you were not able to prepare for in advance. If language is a barrier, consider learning key vocabulary.



Questions to Ask Yourself or the Activity Organizer

- What is my destination culture's attitude toward individuals with disabilities (mobility, psychiatric, hearing, vision, learning, etc.)?
- In what ways should I prepare to adjust to living in a foreign country? (re: housing, food, culture, language, healthcare, etc.)
- How many on-site resources (offices, staff, hospitals, counseling centers, note-taking assistants, books on tape, etc.) are offered in my host city/university?
- How different is the academic environment, and is there flexibility for longer test time, reduced workloads, mandatory excursions, etc.?
- What support systems are necessary to help me overcome barriers or to cope with incidents?
- What barriers might I encounter (both in planning to go abroad and while abroad), and how will I overcome them?
- If I utilize academic, medical, psychological, or other resources at my home institution, will I utilize resources abroad? Where can I find the resources I need? What is the financial cost of these resources and what does my insurance cover?

Specific Considerations for a Physical Disability

- Overall, what is the physical environment and terrain like of my destination city and host university?
- If local transportation, such as buses, trains, planes are available (and corresponding bus or train station and airport), are they accessible?
- Are there accessible housing options that are close to classes? If there are dining areas, laundry rooms, and study areas, are these accessible as well?
- Are bathrooms in key areas (classroom, housing, libraries) accessible?
- Are local businesses (banks, shopping centers, markets, grocery stores) accessible?



Medical Needs

- If you take prescriptions, make sure you have enough to last throughout the entire stay.
- All meds should be stored in their original containers with their labels attached and visible.
- Carry a letter from a physician that describes the medication.
- Always carry medications in your carry-on in the event your checked bag is delayed or lost.
- It is illegal to have medication sent abroad to you via postal mail.
- Confirm your health insurance covers any disability-related medical needs while overseas.
- Ensure your medication is legal in your destination country by contacting the consulate or embassy.

How Accommodations Can Differ

- Disability services that are provided at Toronto Metropolitan University may not be available overseas.
- Tutoring may not be a free service at the host university.
- To obtain a visa, some countries require health information, which can delay the process.
- Electricity for equipment or recharging batteries often requires adapters.
- Learning disabilities may not be recognized in some countries.
- Sign language interpreters may not be certified or available at all times, and interpreting will generally be in the sign language of the country rather than ASL.
- Some countries quarantine guide dogs before they are allowed into the country. It is important to review quarantine legislation of the destination country prior to travel (see [resource on traveling international with a guide dog or service animal](#)).
- Bring mobility aids to use in restrooms without bars or on long train platforms.
- Carry extra spare parts or differing types of casters for a wheelchair.



Resources

- [Accessibility Toronto Metropolitan University](#)
- [Academic Accommodation Support](#) at Toronto Metropolitan University
- [Mobility International USA Resource Library](#) - Phenomenal resource library with lots of first-hand accounts and articles from students with disabilities who have participated in global learning abroad programs.
- [Diversity Abroad](#) - Students with Disabilities Abroad Resource Page
- [Guide to studying Abroad for Students with Disabilities](#) - By MastersDegree.net - great step by step resource.
- [Orientation for Students with Disabilities Studying Abroad](#) - From the University of Minnesota
- [Student Experiences studying abroad with a disability](#) - From the University of Minnesota
- [National Clearing house on Disability Exchange](#) - A comprehensive one-stop resource for people with disabilities, exchange and disability staff interested in study, work, intern, volunteer, research or teach abroad programs.
- [Deaf Identity Abroad](#) - A resource page by Gallaudet University, a private university in the U.S designed to be barrier-free for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.
- [Deaf Travel / Hard-of-Hearing resource](#) - From Good Neighbor Insurance
- [The Global Database on HIV-Specific Travel and Residence Restrictions](#)
- [Studying in Germany as a Student with Disabilities](#) - A resource page specifically for students with disabilities looking to study in Germany. A good outline of your rights under German law and helpful organizations and resources.
- [Studying in Australia as a Student with Disabilities](#) - A resource page specifically for students with disabilities looking to study in Australia. A good outline of your rights under Australian law and helpful organizations and resources.
- [Studying in UK as a Student with Disabilities](#) - If you are interested in studying or interning abroad in the United Kingdom specifically, you may find this resource helpful to learn about your rights, resources available at UK universities, and more.
- [List of Disability Travel Abroad Organizations](#)



2. Queer Students

TMU strives to ensure that students of diverse sexualities, gender identities, and gender expressions experience equal opportunity in their academic career, however, in situations of global travel, the safety and opportunity to thrive may vary based on local laws and cultural attitudes.

To have a safe and rewarding experience when participating in global learning activities abroad, it's important to think about how your sexual orientation and gender expression may shape your experiences abroad. Learning and/or working abroad can present you with exciting possibilities to explore other cultures and understandings of identity. You should be aware of local and cultural attitudes towards sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, as well as local laws that may affect people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. This will help you make informed and safe choices about destinations and programs that best meet your needs.

We've compiled resources and stories for queer students considering going abroad. The goal of these resources are to ensure you can make an informed decision about global learning abroad. As you navigate these resources, feel free to reach out to us with any questions you may have.

Note that this information was adapted from the [University of Maryland - Education Abroad's LGBTQ+ Students Abroad page](#) and [Michigan State University - Office for Education Abroad's Sexuality and Gender Identity page](#).

Questions to Ask Yourself and/or Your Activity Organizer

Sense of Community

If a sense of queer community is important to you, it may be beneficial to do some online research about local queer organizations in your potential destination. If you know of someone who identifies with the queer community and has either studied abroad or visited that location, you may want to ask them about their experiences. Just remember, there are always going to be different opinions and viewpoints.

- How important is it to me to find other queer students or friends while abroad, and how prepared am I to create these relationships?
- Will I be able to maintain these relationships upon my return?
- Are there open queer communities in the country/region/community? Or at the local university?
- If a sense of queer community is important to me, how will I manage the potential difficulties of not finding one while abroad?

Coming Out

If I am open about my sexual orientation and/or gender identity at TMU, will that change at all when I am abroad?

- If I choose to come out while abroad, how will this affect me and my relationships with friends and family upon my return?
- How open will I be about my sexual orientation, gender expression and personal pronouns with my teachers, peers, friends, host family, and others?
- Are there situations in which I would not disclose my sexual orientation or gender identity?
- If I choose to conceal my sexual orientation or gender identity while abroad, what impact will this have on me upon my return?
- What are the documents that you will need for travelling and studying abroad that include the identification of your gender/sex?
- Would it be useful to change the gender/sex marker on any of those documents before traveling?
- For Canadian passports, the [Government of Canada's LGBTQ2 Travel website](#) has information on passport policies for queer individuals. Note that this may require assembling additional information and may take time to complete.

Home Resources

Think about the resources that you currently have and/or use at TMU and in Toronto. You should look into the types of resources that may or may not exist in your potential global learning abroad location.

- Are there resources available for queer people or queer-friendly centers in the host country? Does my global learning program offer queer-friendly housing?
- Does my global learning program offer gender-neutral housing facilities i.e. bathrooms and dormitories?
- Does my global learning program discuss queer considerations during orientation? What resources are available to me upon my return to campus?

Local Attitudes

Try to consult with others who have been to the location you're thinking of going to. If you don't know someone, try to find personal stories others may have shared online about their experiences. Expressions of friendship and body language may be quite different than those in Canada and may cause confusion or uncertainty about who may or may not be queer.

- What are the cultural and local attitudes toward sexual orientation and gender identity in your destination country?
- What do cultural expressions of gender and sexuality look like in your destination country?
- What do gender relations look like in your destination country?
- What are the behavioural norms within the local queer community?
- How are friendships and emotions expressed? What are the body language norms for that region? In places where these are different from Canada, you may experience confusion or uncertainty about who may or may not be queer.
- What is considered typical male and female social behaviour and customary gender relations?

Personal Health & Safety

- What are my safety needs, and how can they best be met? Is the program able to make accommodations for students who request single rooms, private baths, or certain roommates?
- Will I need access to any medications, supplies, or services to properly care for my medical needs, including those related to physical transition, like hormones? Are they available in my host country? If not, will I need any additional documentation to travel with any medications or supplies? Will it be possible to travel legally with these supplies?
- Visit our [Safety Abroad](#) page for more information on our partner [International SOS](#).

Trans Identities

- What are the local attitudes toward transgender individuals?
- What are the laws regarding gender identity and travel documentation?
- What are my safety needs and perceptions, and how can they best be met?
- Will I need access to any medications, supplies, or services to properly care for my medical needs, including those related to physical transition, like hormones? Are they available in my host country? If not, will I need any additional documentation to travel with any medications or supplies? Will it be possible to travel legally with these supplies?
- If I am currently utilizing insurance for any health services, including those related to physical transition, what does insurance coverage look like while I am abroad?

Legality

Concerning legality and enforcement, the [Government of Canada LGBTQ2 Travel](#) website provides general information about travel advice for queer individuals. They also have a country-specific database that includes information on queer rights. You are required to follow the law in your host country. Once outside of Canada, you are not protected by Canadian laws. In some countries, same-sex acts are illegal and the penalties if caught can be very severe.

- Are there any restrictions on freedom of association or expression for queer people?
- Are there “public decency” or “public indecency” laws?
- What are the laws regarding identity and travel documentation?
- Are there hate crime laws in place that provide certain protections for queer minorities?
- What is the legality of same-sex sexual behaviour?
- What is the age of consent for sexual behaviour? Does it differ for heterosexual versus same-sex couples?
- What is the police attitude towards the local queer community?



Resources

- [Positive Space](#) at TMU
- [International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Intersex Association](#) - Has information on legislation in different countries that affects the LGBTQI community.
- [Government of Canada LGBTQ2 Travel Information](#) - Up-to-date information for queer people traveling abroad. Includes helpful pre-departure tips and advice.
- [Sexual Orientation Laws](#) - A map of the world with each country's laws regarding sexual orientation.
- [LGBT Student Guide for Education Abroad](#) - From the University of South Florida
- [National Centre for Transgender Equality - Travel GlobalGayz](#) - A gay-owned charitable travel and culture website
- [Student Stories - LGBTQ Students](#) - Articles by queer people who have participated in global learning activities at Butler University.
- [Things to Think About for LGBTQ Students Itching to Study Abroad](#) - NPR article
- [Coming Out to My Overseas Family: How I was able to finally become my whole queer self in Taiwan](#)
- [9 Major Life Lessons I Learned Studying Abroad as an LGBT](#) - From GoOverseas.com
- [LGBT Rights by Country & Travel Guide](#) - From equaldex.com
- [LGBT World Maps](#) - A world map that cover sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) issues globally.
- [Gender & Sexual Identity Abroad](#) - From Simon Fraser University



3. Racialized Students

As a racialized student, you may have specific questions and concerns about participating in global learning activities abroad. When going abroad, it is important to learn about how people of your racial/ethnic identity are perceived and treated. As you prepare for your global learning activity, our office is here to help you through the process and answer any questions you may have.

Below you will find resources to help you research your destination country and learn more about the experiences of racialized students abroad.

Note that this information was adapted from the [University of Maryland - Education Abroad's Students of Color Abroad page](#), [Portland Community College - Education Abroad's Students of Color Abroad page](#), and [Iowa State University - Study Abroad Center's Multicultural Students page](#).

Questions to Ask Yourself and/or Your Activity Organizer

- What is the relationship between my destination country, my home country and/or my place of racial/ethnic origin?
- What types of experiences do racialized students typically have in the programs (or in the country) I am considering? If I am unsure, how might I go about finding out?
- If staying with a host family, have they accommodated students of my race/ethnicity before? If not, will this be an issue for me or them?
- How is my race/ethnicity perceived in my destination country? What kinds of stereotypes exist about my race/ethnicity? How are people of my race/ethnicity typically treated in my destination country?
- What are my resources if I experience racial or discriminatory incidents?
- What is the history of ethnic or racial tension in the country/region? Is the situation currently hostile to members of a particular race or ethnicity?
- Are issues of racism/ethnic discrimination influenced by immigration in my destination country?
- What are some of the harms I might experience because of my race/ethnicity in my destination country and am I willing to face these challenges?

Things to Consider/Tips When Going Abroad

- In Canada, your race/ethnicity may be a defining factor of your identity. However, while abroad you might be perceived as Canadian first.
- In contrast, assumptions about the social groups associated with your nationality may cause others abroad to question your origins. They might ask you questions about your nationality and cultural heritage, even after you've already stated it. For example, as a racialized person you might be asked where are you “really” from, after you already stated you’re Canadian. Recognize that these questions are most likely a result of a lack of awareness about the social demographics of your country, rather than prejudice.
- When visiting racially/ethnically homogeneous areas, you may encounter curious locals who have never seen people who look like you. They might stare at you excessively, take photos of you, or even try to touch you/your hair. If it makes you uncomfortable, politely express your discomfort and they will most likely respect your boundaries.
- Social support in your destination country and at home can help you navigate a new culture that will likely include new racial/ethnic relations. Know whom to contact when you feel like your race or ethnic background are discriminated against while abroad.
- Do your research about any race-specific products that you use to see if they are available in the destination region (eg. hair and beauty products). Plan to bring with you if needed.
- Having a support system of family and friends may also help you deal with feelings of isolation and culture shock.
- Knowing the social and historical situation in your destination country can help you prepare for the transition from Canada and back. This helps you be prepared if any incidents arise. However, don’t expect prejudice to happen either.
- You may find it empowering to facilitate conversations about race and ethnicity in your destination country.
- However, you are participating in a global learning activity to make the most of your adventure—don’t feel pressured to explain your identity to everyone all the time. Choose opportunities that suit you and that you have identified as safe and inclusive to have this conversation. It isn’t your job to educate everyone in your destination country on your identity—you’re abroad for your own personal growth and education.
- Conversations like those noted above may take place with other students on your global learning abroad program. Some students find it more difficult to work through issues with other students in the program than they do with individuals from the destination country. Be prepared for these situations as well. If you ever feel unsafe, or feel that the discrimination is overwhelming, contact your global learning program coordinators for assistance.
- Finally, note that discrimination can also lead to violence. At all times, make safety your goal. You will often be the first person to know if a situation is becoming unsafe. Trust your instincts, and do not do anything or go anywhere if you’re not comfortable doing so.

Resources

- [All Abroad Diversity Resources](#) - A U.S. based website with resources for racialized students interested in study abroad.
- [Diversity Abroad](#) - A U.S. based website that seeks to promote study abroad opportunities. The site includes blogs, profiles, and forums from students studying abroad.
- [Race Abroad Guide](#) - A guide for “Americans of colour preparing to live abroad” by the Glimpse Foundation. Includes student experiences and results of a survey conducted with racialized students in the U.S. who studied abroad.
- [On She Goes](#) - A digital travel platform that helps women of color travel more confidently, more adventurously, and more often.
- [Meaningful Travel Tips & Tales: Latinx Perspectives](#) – A free e-book by GoAbroad.
- [Support Diversity in Study Abroad Resources](#) - By The Center for Global Education of PLATO: Project for Learning Abroad, Training, and Outreach.
- [Beyond Guilt Trips: Mindful Travel in an Unequal World](#) - By Anu Taranath



4. Indigenous Students

Engaging in global learning activities is a great way to gain new perspectives and to develop unique skills. There are some basic things that all students should be thinking about - i.e. why participate, which program to choose, and how to fund the activity (visit the [Go Abroad](#) section of our website to explore these considerations further). However, as an Indigenous student you may have specific questions and concerns about participating in global learning activities abroad. As you prepare for your global learning activity, our office is here to help you through the process and answer any questions you may have.

If you are interested in exploring Indigenous Studies programming at universities abroad, take a look at some of Toronto Metropolitan University's current partners below. You may be able to participate in the exchange program (for information on how to apply, visit our [Semester Exchange: How to Apply](#) section), or complete an internship or research project. In addition, faculty and staff may have connections at other universities that would facilitate additional opportunities, even if an institutional agreement doesn't already exist (as with the universities listed below).

If you are interested in travelling abroad for a shorter period of time and would like to engage with indigenous communities internationally, one of the gatherings or conferences below may be of interest:

- [International Indigenous Tourism Conference](#)
- [International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences: People and Place](#) - June 2020 in Russia.



Current Partners

Australia	Curtin University	Indigenous Australian Cultural Studies Major Indigenous Community Management and Development Major
Australia	Edith Cowan University	Kurongkurl Katitjin, Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research
Australia	Queensland University of Technology	Faculty of Indigenous Knowledges and Culture
Australia	RMIT	Indigenous Studies Unit (Electives)
Australia	University of South Australia	Aboriginal and Australian Studies
New Zealand	Auckland University of Technology	Maori and indigenous development - Te Ara Poutama



Discrimination and Race Abroad

For the most part, global learning will hopefully be a positive experience. However, you may also encounter some troublesome experiences on your travels. Unfortunately, racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination are not limited to Canadian society; Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world can also experience discrimination simply because of who they are, including their Indigenous identity. You might experience the same, even though you are traveling in other parts of the world. While this may be the case, don't let this possibility prevent you from seeking out international experiences.

One way to help reduce the stress and anxiety of going to a new place is to research it before you leave. As an Indigenous student, it's important to think about and do some research into how Indigenous peoples, both locally and internationally, are perceived and treated in your destination country.

Questions to Ask Yourself and/or Your Activity Organizer

- What are the cultural norms of my destination country? Are there religious/cultural institutions or practices that they adhere to?
- What kinds of stereotypes exist about Indigenous people in my destination country? How are local Indigenous groups perceived there?
- Who is perceived as Indigenous in my destination country, and how is that perception different than my experience as an Indigenous person in Toronto/Canada?
- What is the relationship between my destination country and my home country?
- What are my resources if I experience racial or discriminatory incidents?
- If staying with a host family, have they accommodated Indigenous students before? If not, will this be an issue for me or for them?
- Will I have access to Elders? To Indigenous health and medicine?
- Will I be able to bring sacred or ceremonial items into my destination country? Some countries, such as New Zealand, have very strict biological material restrictions and may confiscate items without special permits.
- How comfortable am I reaching out to local Indigenous groups for support?

Additional Considerations

- While abroad, others might identify you as Canadian first, as opposed to Indigenous. Many people may not be aware of the history of settler colonialism in Canada, or the effects it has to this day on Indigenous nations and communities. How might you explain that history to someone unfamiliar with Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples?
- People in other countries might ask insensitive questions about your cultural heritage, physical features, or national origins. Some may even believe that Indigenous peoples in Canada have been completely wiped out. This may be the case, particularly in homogeneous regions where people have had limited contact with people outside of their region. Recognize that these questions are most likely a result of a lack of awareness about the demographics of Canada, or the reality of settler colonialism and its impacts, rather than prejudice.
- Social support in your destination country and at home can help you navigate a new culture that will likely include new racial/ethnic relations. Know whom to contact when you feel like you are being discriminated against while abroad. Having a support system of family and friends may also help you deal with feelings of isolation and culture shock.
- Knowing the social and historical situation in your destination country can help you prepare for the transition from Canada and back. This helps you be prepared if troubling incidents arise. However, don't expect prejudice to happen either.

You may find it empowering to facilitate conversations about your Indigenous identity in your destination country. However, you are participating in a global learning activity to make the most of your experience — don't feel pressured to explain your identity to everyone all the time. Choose opportunities that you feel are safe, and that suit your interests, needs, and goals. It isn't your job to educate everyone in your destination country on your identity, you're abroad for your own personal growth and education.

Conversations like those noted above may take place with other students on your global learning abroad program. Some students find it more difficult to work through issues with other students in the program than they do with individuals from the destination country. Be prepared for these situations as well. If you ever feel unsafe, or feel that the discrimination is overwhelming, contact your global learning program coordinators for assistance.

Finally, note that discrimination can also lead to violence. At all times, make safety your goal. You will often be the first person to know if a situation is becoming unsafe. Trust your instincts, and do not do anything or go anywhere if you're not comfortable doing so.

Note that some of this information was adapted from [Geneseo - Study Abroad's Native American Students Abroad page](#), [AllAbroad's What About Discrimination for Native American Students page](#), and [AllAbroad's Reasons to Study Abroad for Native American Students page](#).

Resources

- [Indigenous Student Services](#) at Toronto Metropolitan University
- [Toronto Metropolitan's First Nations students experience the world's largest conference on Indigenous Studies](#) - Article from TorontoMet Today about group of Toronto Metropolitan students who travelled to the NAISA conference in June 2019.
- [Reasons to Study Abroad for Native American Students](#) and [What About Discrimination for Native American Students](#) - All Abroad U.S. is a U.S. based organization that aims to help students study abroad. While the article is written for U.S. Native American Students, its message has similar implications for Indigenous students in Canada.
- [Experience spurred study of own culture](#) - An article about Miranda Livers, a student with Cherokee heritage, who participated in an Indigenous exchange program at the University of Otago, New Zealand.



5. Students of Faith Communities

Participating in global learning activities provides opportunities to connect with diverse communities internationally, some of which may reflect differences in religious expression and practice, representing the diversity of faith communities and religions globally. When preparing to travel abroad, it is important for students to explore how their faith is perceived, treated and practiced in their destination country, region or community.

Here are some resources to assist you in researching your destination country and learning more about the experiences of students of faith abroad.

Questions to Ask Yourself and/or Your Activity Organizer

- What do you know about the religion(s) of your destination country and the role religion plays in society?
- What is the attitude of people in your destination country towards other religions and/or your religion?
- How is wearing religious symbols or clothing treated in your destination country?
- How are religious holidays observed and celebrated? Will you want to participate?
- How will people perceive your religion? Are there legal issues with your religion in your destination country?
- Will you have access to your religion's places of worship or religious groups? If not, how will you adjust your religious practice while abroad?
- Will your religion's holidays be observed and celebrated in your destination country? If not, how do you plan to observe holidays?
- Will your religious dietary restrictions be accommodated in your destination country?
- If you plan to live in a homestay while abroad, are you open to living in a homestay with a similar or diverse religious background from yourself? How will this impact your religious practice?

Note that some of this information was adapted from Northwestern University - Global Learning Office's [Religion & Spirituality](#) page.

Resources

- [Student Stories - Faith Communities](#) - Articles by students of faith communities who have participated in global learning activities at Butler University.
- [Religion & Spirituality](#) - Resource page from Northwestern University. Includes resources for finding religious and spiritual groups abroad.
- [The Pluralism Project, Harvard University](#) - This website acts as a hub for links to resources about religion and spirituality around the world.
- [Muzbnb](#) - A hospitality service geared specifically towards the muslim community. This website connects travelers with short-term rentals, hotels, restaurants and more.



6. Mature Students & Students With Families

For mature students and/or students with families, participating in a global learning activity can present you with unique challenges. You may be a parent, have responsibilities to other family members or have a full-time job, and taking classes when you can. Yet, with careful planning, engaging in global learning activities is possible and can be incredibly rewarding (for your family included). Whatever program you choose, additional preparation will be necessary to ensure all your needs are met, so talk to the activity organizer early in the process.

Here are some resources to help you start thinking about how you can participate in global learning activities, and to learn more about the experiences of other mature students/students with families.

Note that this information was adapted from the [University of Kansas - KU International Affairs' Students with Children page](#) and [Portland Community College - Education Abroad's Non-Traditionally Aged Students Abroad page](#).

For Mature Students

Questions to Ask

- What length of program would work best for me?
- Short-term global learning programs may work better for students with multiple commitments. There are short-term programs available in many TMU faculties throughout the year and summer term, ranging from two to eight weeks. However, don't automatically discount longer programs. Advanced planning and commitment to identify options that work for your unique situation are possible and essential to feasibility.
- What type of living situation are you comfortable with? Programs may only offer housing with a host family or a roommate. It's important to know what works for you.
- What would be the costs associated with going abroad?
- Does your work allow you to take time off, either as vacation, sabbatical or unpaid leave? Will you be able to go back to work when you return?

For Students with Families

Can I bring my child(ren)/spouse/partner with me when I go abroad?

Depending on the program, you may be permitted to have your child and/or spouse accompany you while you go abroad. However, there are challenges that you should consider: Accounting for unanticipated additional costs, housing restrictions and/or special visa requirements. Developing a separate itinerary for your child and/or spouse as they most likely won't be permitted to participate in any of your program activities (classes, group activities/ meals, excursions, etc.). Arranging childcare for accompanying children. Depending on the length of the program, you may be able to enroll children in a local school, but it may be challenging to find a school prior to arrival in your destination country. Purchasing comprehensive international medical insurance for your child or spouse. Your student health insurance may not cover your family. You will be responsible for ensuring your family has adequate health insurance.

Housing, Childcare and Additional Considerations

- Can you find a host university that will provide housing options to accommodate your family? What are the off-campus housing options?
- Are there real estate agents/agencies in the host country that provide rental housing for families travelling abroad?
- Are you traveling abroad with a spouse or partner that will be able to care for your child while you are studying/ working/doing research? If not, what childcare options are available at your host university or in your destination city that will work for your budget?
- If you can't/ don't want to bring your children with you, can you leave your child with a spouse, a close family member or friend while abroad?
- Do you have family members (children/partners) in school? What education options will exist for them to continue their education while you are abroad? Are they able to take a break from schooling? If so, how will this affect their future education?
- Be aware of extra costs that are associated with traveling with children. These include international health insurance, immunizations, and flight tickets for the entire family. Some items may be covered by your program for you, but not for your child(ren) or family.
- What are the immigration rules surrounding bringing your family with you to study, work or do research abroad? Would they require separate visas? Would their visas allow them to enroll in school or to work? If they are on a tourist visa, would they need to leave the country and re-enter with a new visa while you are studying? How much will additional visas cost?

What are the benefits and drawbacks of a semester/year exchange with my family?

Spending a semester abroad with your children or family members can be rewarding for everyone. Together you will be able to experience a new culture, explore new places, try new foods, and build memories you can share in the future. However, it will take careful planning to make this a possibility. Consider childcare, schooling options, housing, language barriers, and finances. Some partner schools do have family-housing options, as well as other family supports. Start planning early, and work with your activity coordinator to determine feasibility. We are happy to support you as best as we can.

What are the benefits and drawbacks of short-term programs with my family?

Shorter programs (from a few days to a few weeks), over winter break, spring break, and/or the summer, may be more feasible for students with families. The shorter length of time makes it easier to secure care for your loved ones locally while you are abroad. This may also be easier if you have family members in school, with health issues, or other commitments that may complicate a full semester abroad. While you may not spend as much time abroad, short-term programs are also immensely rewarding experiences and may be more feasible.

Cultural Attitudes

- What are the local and cultural norms around raising a family? How will your unique family structure be perceived in your destination of choice?
- What are the local and cultural norms around parenting and childcare? (e.g. daycare services, how to deal with misbehavior, notions of discipline).
- Is there an expat community or cultural centre that you and/or your family can connect? Is there a mature student support office or community to connect with?

Resources

- [Worries and “What Ifs”: My Decision to Study Abroad as a Mother by Maria Caballero](#)
- [Transitions Abroad: Family Travel Abroad](#)
- [Traveling with Children - The Why's and How-To's](#)
- [Staying Safe While Traveling Abroad With Your Family](#)