




MONASH  
University

## MONASH ABROAD SURVIVAL KIT

[monash.edu/study-abroad](https://monash.edu/study-abroad)







Monash University values global learning and Monash Abroad is delighted that you have decided to pursue part of your degree overseas. Your participation in an education abroad program will engage you, add value to your degree and help you achieve your career and personal goals.

This guide is intended for students going abroad on exchange, intercampus exchange and study abroad programs. It can be used to guide you through the preparations that need to be made before you go overseas and inform you on how to stay safe whilst abroad. By signing and returning an Acknowledgment of Conditions (AoC) form at the point of application to Monash Abroad you have confirmed you have read an online version of this guide and agree to the conditions and advice it contains. This is an updated version for you to take with you on your travels. We wish you all the best with your journey which starts from the moment you consider studying overseas and will continue to reward you for the rest of your life.

# BEFORE YOU GO

## TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

### Passports

Your passport will need to be valid for six months after your program end date. If your passport is close to expiring, apply for a new passport immediately because you will need it in order to obtain a visa and be admitted to your host country.

Make a photocopy of your passport information page and keep it separate from the original when you travel. Leave a copy with friends or family back home as this will speed up the process to obtain a new passport should it be lost or stolen.

### Visas

#### Do I need a visa?

It is your responsibility to determine whether or not you will need a visa and which visa is appropriate to obtain. Your host university may provide you with advice or documentation in order to apply for a visa.

#### When should I get my visa?

It is a good idea to start researching visas for your host country and all countries that you plan to visit well in advance. You should not apply for your visa until you receive your host university acceptance. Once you do receive your acceptance, apply for your visa as soon as possible as they often take a number of weeks to obtain.

#### Can a Monash Abroad International Education Coordinator answer my specific visa questions?

Sorry! Monash Abroad coordinators are unable to advise you on specific visa questions. While we provide general advice on our website, please check with the consulate or embassy of your host country about how to apply for your visa, as this is often determined by your own citizenship.

### Airline tickets

**“I found a really great deal for a flight to my host country, can I book it even though I haven’t received my host university acceptance?”**

While we do not encourage you to purchase airline tickets until you receive your host university acceptance, check with your travel agent if they have any special arrangements for study abroad/exchange students. For example, where you pay a deposit on a ticket and pay the balance when you receive your host university acceptance.

### General advice

- Local travel agents such as STA Travel (Campus Centre, Clayton) have special deals for exchange students.
- Consider an around-the-world ticket and ask about student fares, which are often cheaper.
- Check your flight status 24 hours before departure.

### Travelling before your program

All students must arrive at their host university in time for the commencement of the program, including orientation activities. We recommend that you wait to do extensive travel until after your program finishes. Before you go you will need to complete various tasks such as obtaining a visa, enrolling in units and finalising your arrangements for your host university that are a lot easier to do while you are still in Australia.

### Financial advice

#### Budgeting

Be sure to budget enough money to purchase your airline tickets, visa and cover your first few weeks in your host country in the event that you do not receive your Monash Abroad Travel Scholarship or OS-HELP loan when you initially expected.

Check exchange rates and the cost of living in your host country as it will differ from what you spend in Australia. Most students tend to spend more money while studying abroad so be sure to budget for extra shopping, travelling and eating out expenses.

#### Centrelink

While abroad you may be eligible to receive Centrelink benefits. You will need to apply in person no earlier than 13 weeks and at least 6 weeks before the start of your time abroad. You may be required to submit a letter from Monash University confirming your participation in a Monash Abroad program. This letter should be requested from your faculty exchange adviser.

Be sure you understand the portability of your Centrelink payments while you are away. The portability period is the period of time you are able to be overseas before or after your program and still receive payments, which is usually six weeks in total. If you think you will be travelling for longer than the portability period allows please contact Centrelink as there could be implications to receiving your payments.

#### Banking

Notify all financial institutions (banks, credit card companies) about your travel plans and that you will be using your Australian accounts while overseas. Also ask about fees associated with accessing your accounts while overseas and if you will need a special card or PIN while you are away. In many cases it is possible to open a local account upon arrival in your host country. This is beneficial as it will be easier to withdraw cash and will often have cheaper fees. Consider getting a travel card from your bank which acts as a debit card and is not subject to exchange rate fluctuations.

#### Money

Major airports commonly have ATMs from which you can withdraw local currency upon your arrival. However, you should do some research on whether it is best to exchange local currency before you leave Melbourne.

## TO GET YOUR MONASH ABROAD SCHOLARSHIP YOU MUST:

- Have a full nomination from Monash Abroad
- Receive host university acceptance
- Enrol in exchange/study abroad units at your faculty
- Have submitted your signed Acknowledgment of Conditions Form to Monash Abroad

# MONASH-RELATED TASKS

## Academic responsibilities

1. You must visit your faculty and complete all enrolment procedures before you depart Australia. You will not get credit for units taken overseas if you fail to do so. You cannot enrol yourself in exchange/study abroad units in WES, only your faculty can complete this process.
2. It is common for students to need to make adjustments to units that were approved for exchange both before they depart and once they arrive. You will need to get faculty approval for any new units requested and the approvals will need to be sent by email to your Monash Abroad coordinator. Ensure your faculty enrolls you in the new units.
3. You must be enrolled in a full-time Monash load (18 – 24 credit points) while overseas. The number of units required at your host university may be different from what is required at Monash.
4. While on exchange you may not be enrolled in Monash Distance Education units.
5. International students must enrol in the equivalent of 24 Monash credit points whilst overseas.
6. If you are enrolled in concurrent degrees (not a dual degree) eg Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Languages, you must check with your faculty regarding intermitting from one of the degrees.
7. If you withdraw from the program you must notify your Monash Abroad coordinator and your faculty exchange adviser so they can update your enrolment details to reflect changes.

## Travel insurance

As part of the Monash Abroad Travel Scholarship program, outbound students from an Australian campus, registered with Monash Abroad and on a Monash approved program, will be covered under a Monash University travel policy. All students who are abroad for one semester are covered for their entire program period and in addition, 60 days prior to their program commencement date and 60 days post program completion date.

All students who are abroad for two semesters are covered for 365 days. They will not be covered for an additional 60 days prior and post program. This insurance policy also includes access to 24-hour a day medical and emergency assist services.

Monash Abroad anticipates this policy will cover the overwhelming majority of students, however as with all insurances, some personal and unique circumstances may exclude you from coverage. As a result you will need to confirm your personal eligibility, check exclusion criteria and take responsibility to disclose relevant information.

All insurance details, policy contents and information are published on the Monash Abroad website.

## Monash Abroad Travel Scholarship

Students accepted into a Monash Abroad administered program may be eligible for a Monash Abroad Travel Scholarship package to support their overseas program. The scholarship package may vary from year to year and can be confirmed via the Monash Abroad website.

### When will I get my scholarship?

You will receive your scholarship about four weeks before your program start date, if the following is completed at least four weeks prior:

- have a full nomination from Monash Abroad
- submit your Acknowledgement of Conditions form
- submit your host university acceptance (if it came directly to you)
- enrol in exchange or study abroad units at your faculty.

If you withdraw from your program after your scholarship is paid you must refund the entire amount to Monash Abroad. Failure to do so will result in an encumbrance on your Monash enrolment.

## Financial advice

### OS-HELP

You may be eligible to receive an OS-HELP loan. OS-HELP is an Australian Government loan scheme that assists eligible students to study overseas. Your OS-HELP debts will be added to your accumulated HELP debt.

**[monash.edu/study-abroad/outbound/financial/loans](https://monash.edu/study-abroad/outbound/financial/loans)**

OS-HELP loans are normally paid about four to six weeks before the start of your overseas program, provided you have met all its requirements, have been approved for it and returned the debt confirmation form to Monash Abroad.



# PERSONAL TASKS

## Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Before you embark on a program abroad there are two important reasons to consult DFAT:

1. Registering with DFAT will assist you in gaining access to consular services easily and quickly if you encounter a problem during your time abroad. Students who are not Australian citizens may use the DFAT website to check travel information but should register with consular officials from their home country. To register visit: **[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)**
2. Monash University acts on advice from DFAT so if they issue a warning on deferring all travel or non-essential travel, level 4, your exchange will be suspended. If DFAT issues a level 3 warning the University will decide whether it is safe for you to travel to or remain in that country. To view advice visit: **[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)**

## Medical tips

- Arrange for a health check-up with your doctor, dentist and optometrist to ensure you are in good health to travel.
- If you have chronic health problems you may need to work out a health management plan with your GP. Make sure medications are available at your destination, or arrange to take them with you.
- Take an adequate supply of prescription medications to last the period of your stay. Carry a copy of the prescription and the generic name of the medication. You may also want to consider taking a copy of your contact lenses or glasses prescription in case you need replacements while away.
- Visit a travel health clinic well in advance to arrange vaccinations for all countries you visit whilst abroad. Be sure to take a summary of these vaccinations including dates they were received.
- Note for women: You may need to carry adequate supplies of feminine hygiene products to cover the length of your stay. You may also wish to take contraceptives with you as these items could be in limited supply or quite different to what you are used to.

## Research your host culture and institution

Knowing a bit about your destination will help inform some of your pre-departure decisions. For example, knowing what to pack, how you will be getting around and what to expect on a daily basis. Here are a few topics you should independently research before you go:

- Climate
- Cost of living
- Common cultural differences
- Regional maps and local transport
- Exchange rates and currency
- Health and safety, including vaccines
- Seasonal sports and pastimes
- Language

You can find this information online, from past exchange students or in guide books.

## Arranging accommodation

Your host university will often give you information about accommodation options. It is very important that you follow all instructions and deadlines as accommodation, both on and off-campus is usually in high demand.

If you plan on living on-campus, be sure to have a place allocated before you leave Australia. Some universities offer early move-in so contact the housing office at your host university to see what arrangements can be made.

Off-campus is a good option if it fits your budget. Before departing search the internet for rental options and don't rush and rent the first place you find. Ensure you do not sign any contracts or pay a deposit/bond before you have viewed the accommodation in-person. It is therefore best to arrange temporary accommodation for your first week or two so that you have the opportunity to see your options and meet those you may be living with. Ask for local advice on a rental contract before you sign and find out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

## Statutory Declaration (Stat Dec)

Monash Abroad coordinators are unable to share private student information with others (including parents, family and friends) unless the student has provided a signed statutory declaration. Please arrange this before you leave as you may find it convenient to have a contact in Australia who can act on your behalf.

## Monash Ambassador

While you are overseas you will be representing both Monash University and Australia so it is important that you recognise your role in the exchange process. This may seem like a fairly ambiguous concept but here is a list of what being a good ambassador means:

- Respecting the local culture both in class and while out socially. Classroom culture might be more formal so please treat academics with respect.
- Your behaviour, both positive and negative, directly affects the future of Monash Abroad programs and the opportunity for other Monash students to go on exchange.
- Represent Monash at events on campus such as study abroad fairs or cultural events.
- A good ambassador will make friends with local and international students and highlight the positives and opportunities of Monash specifically and Melbourne more broadly.

## LGBTIQ Advice

Australian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer students preparing to go on exchange should be aware that social attitudes towards the LGBTIQ community around the world can be very different from those in Australia. It is highly advised that you prepare well and read up about your destination before you go, particularly if you are planning an exchange to a more socially conservative country.

Laws or attitudes towards the LGBTIQ community can create potential risks for exchange or study abroad students. You might also find other sources of information to be useful such as online resources, guidebooks, government resources and local and international LGBTIQ organisations.

Some questions you might consider:

- What are the laws like regarding LGBTIQ in my host country?
- What are the cultural attitudes towards LGBTIQ in my host country?
- What resources are available at my host university? Do they have LGBTIQ support programs or student groups?
- Are there any LGBTIQ-friendly establishments nearby?

With careful planning and research it is possible for LGBTIQ students to have very successful and rewarding study abroad experiences.

# AFTER YOU ARRIVE

## CONTACT DETAILS

### Contact your family

Contact your family as soon as you arrive at your destination so they are not worried about you. Get familiar with local dialling procedures or register for a Skype account.

### Update Web Enrolment System (WES)

Whilst overseas it is essential that Monash staff can keep in touch with you, especially if an emergency were to arise. Make sure the following contact details are continuously up to date on WES:

- Postal address
- Emergency contact
- Local address including phone numbers and host university email account

### International students

Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) requires you to keep this information current so be sure to update the above on WES.

### Check your Monash email address

You must check your Monash email address at least twice a week whilst overseas. If there is an emergency or academic requirement this is how Monash will contact you.

## CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

As you settle into your surroundings the initial excitement of being overseas may begin to wear off. Subtle differences that you may not have noticed at first begin to become more obvious as time goes by. The curiosity and excitement of discovering these cultural nuances may start to turn into frustration or anxiety. This period of cultural adjustment is often referred to as 'culture shock'. Culture shock does not always happen quickly; it can accumulate from a series of events that constantly challenge your basic values and beliefs about what is 'right' or 'normal'. When experiencing the first pangs of culture shock it might be helpful to step back and reflect on some differences you are noticing:

- How do different aspects of your identity (e.g. Australian, male, Asian, religious) affect the way people act towards you? How do those same aspects affect how you react to cultural differences?
- How do students relate to academic and professional staff? More formal?
- Are you noticing differences in the academic structure? Do you find yourself doing assignments more frequently?
- Who are you making friends with? And why are you making friends with them? Do locals seem interested in making friends with you?
- What is the local sense of humour like? Do they often use sarcasm?
- How does going out socially with friends differ from what you are used to?

### What can you do?

If what felt exotic at first now makes you feel annoyed and uncomfortable, don't let the feelings get you down and ruin what could otherwise be a life-changing experience. Below are some ways to cope before and while you are experiencing culture shock:

- **Get an 'informant'**  
Make friends with someone from the local culture. They can be your go-to person in times of confusion or frustration, a kind of travelling 'cultural guidebook'.
- **Get a same culture buddy**  
Make friends with someone from your home culture. Venting to someone who has been through the same experiences as you is helpful, just don't let it turn into a 'hate everything about this country' session.
- **Every day make yourself find something you love about the culture**  
Celebrating the good can take the edge off of what you see as the bad. Try to think about what you will miss when you return home.
- **Stay in touch with home**  
Skype friends and family.
- **Speak to your host university coordinator**
- **Be a tourist**  
Plan time to do the cheesy things locals wouldn't normally take part in. It helps being an outsider because you can find wonder in things locals don't notice anymore.

- **Do something that takes courage every day**

Adventure surrounds you in another culture so it can simply mean going to the market by yourself.

- **Do something familiar**

Figure out a way to make your favourite foods from home or watch your favourite movies.

- **Go for walks**

Take time in this new culture to figure out how the minutiae of life gets done and being on foot helps you notice the little details such as the colour houses are painted or how rubbish is collected.

- **Journal**

There's no better place to get it all out than on the pages of a book no one else will see. It will also help for you to look back on it and see how far you have come. If you consider blogging and you are in the depths of culture shock, you may hurt the local people with your feelings. Wait until you cool down a bit, you will be glad you did.

- **Ask for packages from home**

Have someone, anyone, send you Vegemite, shampoo, or bathers you have been missing from home. If you can't find anyone to send them, buy them online.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

## Safety tips

- Find out the number for emergency services in your host country.
- Make several copies of important documents such as your passport, credit card, driver's licence, visa documents, travel insurance. Leave a copy at home.
  - If you lose your passport you can either report it online or at the local High Commission, do this immediately.
  - File a police report.
  - To obtain a replacement you will need: written evidence of citizenship (eg birth certificate), a copy of the police report, new photographs and money.
- Be aware of the amount of alcohol and other substances you are consuming as the majority of incidents whilst overseas involve alcohol.
  - Observe local customs about drinking and going out in the evening.
- When going out be sure to surround yourself with people you trust. Be cautious when you meet new people as their intentions may not always be as they appear.
- When travelling to other cities/countries be sure people both in Australia and at your host institution know where you will be and when you will return.
- Be mindful of your belongings whether in your accommodation or when you are out in the city to avoid being pick-pocketed or robbed.
  - If someone threatens you with force in an attempt to rob you, give them what they want. Report the incident to the police immediately.
- Do not participate in any political activities in the countries you visit, avoid angry groups or demonstrations.
- Be respectful of the dress code of your host culture and do your best to not show signs of wealth.

## Emergency plan

Emergencies sometimes arise whilst travelling. They can include illness, accidents, natural disasters, political instability or terrorism. It is essential that all students on Monash-sponsored overseas programs be prepared for any emergency.

The following checklist will assist you in developing an emergency response plan for use in the event that you find yourself in a threatening or critical situation. You should develop a plan before leaving Australia.

### For immediate action

- Register with your embassy or consulate.
- For Australian citizens: **[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)**
- Monitor developments through embassy, media and web resources.
- Maintain contact with host culture staff and friends, Monash staff and family and friends in Australia.
- Monitor your email regularly.

### Planning an emergency response

- Evaluate options: stay put, move to a safer location, or return to Australia as soon as possible.
- Make sure you know the local emergency telephone number – program it into your mobile phone.
- Make sure you know the location of the nearest hospital or doctor.
- Note the emergency contact for the insurance underwriter Dynamiq Accident and Health Assist **+61 2 9978 6666**
- Make decisions in collaboration with your coordinator at your host university, Monash Abroad and Australian embassy or consulate.
- Communicate your plans and movements with your family, Monash Abroad and host country coordinator.

## Monash University support

- While Monash students are responsible for their own safety, Monash Abroad monitors international developments that affect our students safety and welfare. We monitor DFAT warnings and will inform students of relevant information.
- Students may seek advice from Monash Abroad at any time before or during their overseas program.
- Monash advises that all students should follow the DFAT travel advice and/or advice issued by local authorities.
- If DFAT issues a 'do not travel' warning Monash University may cancel the participation of any student who is currently undertaking a Monash program in that country or is planning to do so.
  - In that event the University expects you to depart the country immediately at your own expense, with the assistance of the Monash Abroad office.
- In an emergency, the Monash Abroad office can assist you in establishing embassy contact, maintaining contact with host university networks, communication with family and coordinating travel arrangements.

## Contact details

Monash Abroad can be contacted at the following numbers in the event of an emergency:

Australian office hours: **+61 3 9905 1551**  
24 hours: **+61 3 9905 3333**  
Email: **[monash.abroad@monash.edu](mailto:monash.abroad@monash.edu)**

Travel Insurance – Dynamiq Accident and Health Assist on **+61 2 9978 6666**.

Latest travel advice can be found at:

- DFAT: **[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)**
- US State Department Travel Warnings: **[travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)**
- Australian Broadcasting Company: **[www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)**
- Reuters: **[www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)**

If you need counselling or support you can contact the Monash Campus Counselling Team on  
**+61 3 8620 5300**

The following toll-free counseling numbers are also available for students in Italy and Malaysia:  
Italy – 800 791 847  
Malaysia – 1800 818 356

Students need to identify themselves as Monash students when the operator answers.



# RETURNING HOME

## PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

### Travel and living

- Confirm your travel plans and make sure your flights are scheduled to depart as expected.
- Wrap up housing details such as moving out, returning your keys and ending your lease.
- Close bank accounts and other institutions you may have become involved with.
- Return all library books and other items you may have borrowed.
- Research how you will transport larger items home.
- Pay any outstanding debts.

### Academic transcripts

1. Your transcript will normally be sent by your host institution directly to Monash Abroad. This could take anywhere from six weeks to six months.
2. Monash Abroad will make a copy and send it to your faculty and forward the original to you.
3. It is your responsibility to check that your credit has been entered on your Monash academic record.
  - a. Study abroad/exchange marks will be shown as SFR (satisfied faculty requirement) or N (fail) unless you have been advised otherwise. One exception is students studying languages abroad, who will receive a mark and standard final grade (HD, D, C, P, N) for the units that they undertake with the host institution.
  - b. Intercampus exchange marks will appear on your transcript as usual.
4. Should you leave behind debt at your host university your Monash enrolment will be encumbered until the debt has been cleared.

### Cultural re-adjustment

You might be surprised to learn that it is just as important to mentally prepare yourself for returning from exchange as it is going on exchange. You have probably grown accustomed to the lifestyles, culture and values of the host culture. Remember how different the new culture felt when you first arrived – the ‘culture shock’ you experienced? Believe it or not, returning to your old stomping grounds can be just as rattling.

### Homecoming events

Look out for events at Monash and in Melbourne that focus on students that return from abroad. They will often have a cultural debrief, careers workshop and social activity. Your Monash Abroad coordinator encourages you to attend these events.





# CHECKLIST

## PRE-DEPARTURE

### Study plan

- ☐ Enrolled in Monash exchange or study abroad units in person by my faculty (check WES for confirmation)
- ☐ Copy of Monash transcript to take to host institution in case of new unit approvals not previously submitted.

### Monash Abroad

- ☐ Acceptance of offer by host university returned to Monash Abroad or directly to the host university
- ☐ Monash Abroad Acknowledgement of Conditions form signed and submitted to Monash Abroad

### Travel documents

- ☐ Passport obtained
- ☐ Student visa obtained (if relevant)
- ☐ Travel insurance documents read and printed off certificate of currency
- ☐ Flights booked and paid
- ☐ Three copies of all travel documents (one to leave at home)

### Money

- ☐ Checked that Australian ATM card will work overseas
- ☐ Advised bank that will be using credit card overseas
- ☐ Purchased foreign cash (if required)
- ☐ Centrelink notified of departure and letter submitted (if applicable)

### Other

- ☐ First few nights accommodation booked and confirmed
- ☐ Updated WES with postal, emergency and overseas contact details
- ☐ Global roaming activated on mobile (if required)
- ☐ Skype/Facetime/Whatsapp set up to call home upon arrival in host country
- ☐ Vaccinations obtained (if required)
- ☐ Supplies of essential medications and prescriptions and medical note
- ☐ Essential and emergency contact numbers in carry-on luggage, e.g. host university, family, Monash Abroad

## ARRIVAL

- ☐ Contact family within 12 hours of arriving at destination
- ☐ Contact family (in case you missed the first point)
- ☐ Obtain local currency
- ☐ Contact international office at host university and write down emergency phone number
- ☐ Update your new home address in WES if you did not have your overseas address before you left Australia
- ☐ Register with Australian embassy or consulate (international students should register with their home embassy or consulate in their host country)
- ☐ Write down emergency contact numbers to carry with you
  - local equivalent of 000
  - family
  - host university international office
  - Australian embassy or consulate
  - Monash Abroad
  - Dynamiq Accident and Health Assist (Travel Insurance) +61 2 9978 6666
- ☐ Check details of host university orientation program
- ☐ Check enrolment arrangements

## Further information

### Monash Abroad

First Floor, Campus Centre  
21 Chancellors Walk  
Monash University VIC 3800

Telephone: +61 3 9905 1551  
Fax: +61 3 9905 8334  
Email: [monash.abroad@monash.edu](mailto:monash.abroad@monash.edu)

[monash.edu/study-abroad](http://monash.edu/study-abroad)

## Emergency contact

In a real emergency, Monash students who are currently overseas can contact Monash Abroad 24 hours per day.

Office hours: **+61 03 9905 1551**

Emergency only after hours: **+61 03 9905 3333**



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[twitter.com/Monashabroad](https://twitter.com/Monashabroad)



[pinterest.com/monashabroad](https://pinterest.com/monashabroad)

**Reference:** University of Melbourne, Melbourne Global Mobility, Pre-Departure Guide, 2010.

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