

LTC14D168

Title: Support for students whilst studying abroad
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Circulation: LTC – 18 March 2015
Agenda: LTC14A004
Version: Final
Status: Open

Issue

To review the arrangements for supporting students whilst studying abroad as an approved part of their course. The review has focussed on one particular aspect and that is the support arrangements that are in place should a student encounter significant problems whilst he/she is studying abroad at a partner University or other organisation; this review has highlighted the need for other aspects to be reviewed next year.

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to endorse the recommendations in the attached report, which should lead to an improved level of support being made available to students whilst they are studying abroad. It is hoped that most of the short to medium term recommendations could be implemented in time for 2015/16, however, those listed under medium to long term would require further investigation and consultation.

Resource Implications

For short to medium term recommendations, the primary resource required is that of staff-time, for e.g., to enhance the Study Abroad website. Those listed as medium to long term would require further investigation.

Risk Implications

An enhanced level of information, and clarification and guidance on the level of support available to students should help to improve students' study abroad experience.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that any of the recommendations contained in the report will impact on groups with protected characteristics. It is hoped that

Timing of decisions

LTC members are asked to endorse the recommendations in the attached report so that the short to medium term solutions provided could be implemented in time for the 2015/16.

Further Information

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Background

The project was initiated by LTC during a discussion of a new course proposal from PSY to create a year abroad variant to the BSc Psychology course. The Director of University Services (Learning and Teaching) was asked to establish a Working Group to consider arrangements for supporting UEA students who were not on campus because they were studying abroad.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHILST STUDYING ABROAD

1. BACKGROUND

The project was initiated by LTC during a discussion of a new course proposal from PSY to create a year abroad variant to the BSc Psychology course.

Extract from LTC Minutes 19.3.14

65. NEW AWARDS AND NEW COURSE PROPOSALS

Resolved

(ii) "that the Director of University Services (Learning and Teaching) would establish a Working Group which would consider arrangements for supporting UEA students who were not on campus because they were studying abroad. This would include consideration of PGR students."

2. WORKING GROUP

Set-up by Andrea Blanchflower, DUS (LTS) in September 2014. The Working Group's membership was extended in December 2014 to include a representative from the UUEAS and a current student who had had experience of studying abroad. Membership at December 2014 as follows:

Jane Amos* (DOS)
Angelina Bingley (REG)
Karen Blackney* (ARM)
Andrea Blanchflower (REG)
Anne-Marie Bruner-Tracey* (ARM)
Becky Fitt* (LTS)
Annie Grant (DOS)
Michele Pavey* (LTS)
Claudina Richards (LAW)
Caroline Sauverin (LTS)
Connor Rand (UUEAS)
Sam Lane (BIO)

*(with * being the Project Team)*

3. AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Identified by the Working Group these are as follows:

- a) To review the arrangements for supporting students whilst studying abroad as an approved part of their course and in particular the support arrangements in place if students were ill or had significant problems whilst studying abroad at a partner University, or other organisation, and where necessary and appropriate to make recommendations to LTC to improve or enhance the system.
- b) To identify best practice
- c) To provide guidance for students studying abroad
- d) To communicate availability of support/guidance to students studying abroad

4. CURRENT UNIVERSITY PROVISION

Currently the support provided to students whilst they are studying abroad is very much dependent on how that element fits into their course. Students can study abroad in a variety of ways:

- a) on the University's Study Abroad scheme,
- b) as part of the Erasmus+ programme (for e.g., Year In Industry placements can use this route),
- c) on a work-based placement.

The Study Abroad Office administers the University's Study Abroad scheme, with the students usually based at a host University in the country they are visiting. The Study Abroad Office also supports the Erasmus+ programme where students have the opportunity to work in Europe for a period of 2-12 months – this programme can also be used for Year in Industry placements.

Work-based placements, could be with a charity or some other organisation, and are usually overseen by the student's School. A risk assessment exercise should be carried out by the student with the relevant member of academic staff in advance the placement. The student's contact details whilst abroad should be passed to the relevant LTS Hub for recording.

Students on the Study Abroad scheme are provided with a Study Abroad Guide, the current version can be found at:

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/documents/2654296/5385838/Study+Abroad+Guide+2015-16>

All students have access to the University's Code of Practice for Placement and work-based learning – which contains a risk assessment tool and identifies the types of risk (low, medium and high) under headings such as location, health, work. The Code of Practice also makes clear what students' responsibilities are when they are studying or working away from the University and what they should expect. The Code of Practice can be found at:

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/placements>

Further input was sought from:

- The PGR Office, which is willing to contribute to, and benefit from, this project where matters raised are central to all students (UG, PGT, PGR).
- Careers Service re Internships; currently their involvement in internships abroad has been limited to a small number of PhD students who have taken up internships in Europe. These students have secured Erasmus funding and have accessed the guidance materials provided by the Study Abroad Office.
- Planning Office, SLC Liaison re student finance matters – works closely with the Study Abroad Office to provide as much pre-departure information as possible. Also emails specific groups of students to raise awareness of the information provided online.

5. BEST PRACTICE

A brief search of the internet found that 6 UK universities (Bristol, Exeter, Hull, Nottingham, Manchester, Sussex) supported their students when they were studying abroad by providing guidance on their websites – usually as part of their Study Abroad or International Office webpages.

The Project Team considered:

- a) Type of support to be provided
- b) How support should be provided

- c) Communication of the information

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Project Team recommended that for UEA to support its students whilst they are studying/working abroad the below was necessary:

- a) Each student must ensure that they provide their own contact details for the period abroad; e.g., current mobile phone number.
- b) Each student must have, as a minimum, a named contact in the institution/organisation that they will be based in; with the full address, telephone number and email address for that contact.
- c) Any placement approval forms and learning agreements should be revised so that the details can be included (address, telephone number) for an out of hours emergency contact (this could be the student’s named contact person) at the host institution/organisation where this is available.
- d) Students should have access online to a number of Frequently Asked Questions (see draft in Appendix 1) which would provide guidance should they encounter a problem, together with a list of UEA telephone numbers to contact for advice and in an emergency.
- e) The FAQ and guidance should be provided via an enhanced Study Abroad website, which should be renamed *Study and Work Abroad*. An area dedicated to support for students who are working/studying abroad (possibly called ‘*Support while abroad*’) could be created under the existing ‘Outgoing Student’ section of the website – all information and guidance could be held here.
- f) All services (e.g., DOS, LTS) and the UUEAS would be asked to include links to the new webpages in their own webpages; students expressing an interest in studying/working abroad would be directed to these. Teaching Directors would also be alerted on behalf of their Schools and asked to notify their colleagues.
- g) In addition to providing information via an enhanced Study Abroad website, students’ experience when studying abroad could be further improved by the following:

(i) Short to medium term implementation

Recommendations (not in order of priority)		Action
1	A review of support provided by the Study Abroad Office by Divisional Heads.	Consideration of NSS comments together with information received by the Study Abroad Office. (LTS with ARM, DOS, REN, PLN)

2	Providing general basic training for Security Lodge staff on handling calls from students dealing with difficult situations when abroad.	A briefing to Security Lodge staff (DOS)
3	Providing a contact list of equivalent support services to those at UEA for those overseas host institutions that the University has reciprocal agreements with.	Study Abroad Office (working with DOS)
4	Adding student experiences to the website; e.g., providing some examples of what students could expect on arrival.	Study Abroad Office (working with UUEAS)
5	Providing clear information for students when studying abroad about who they should contact and when.	Study Abroad Office (working with DOS, LTS and UUEAS)

(ii) Medium to long term implementation

Recommendations (not in order of priority)		Action
1	Identifying the role of the School in preparing students for studying abroad and on their return.	Schools (working with Study Abroad Office, DOS, LTS and UUEAS)
2	Ensuring that student feedback is used to inform future practice pre-departure and on return to UEA.	Study Abroad Office (working with DOS, LTS, and UUEAS)
3	Sending automated emails to students on arrival at their overseas host institutions containing key information.	Study Abroad Office (working with LTS and Student Administrative Systems support)
4	Introducing a global mobility software platform could lead to improvements in programme management, student access to information, and UEA's interactions with its students whilst they are studying abroad. The information held in this platform should be readily accessible by a student's Personal Adviser, the Study Abroad Office, the Dean of Students Office and LTS.	Study Abroad Office (initially working with DOS, LTS, and PGR Office)

While you are studying abroad

If you are studying at an overseas institution when you arrive at your destination you should get in touch with the key contacts there and familiarise yourself with the Study Abroad Office. These staff are there to support you if you have any queries or concerns. Make sure that you know how to contact them in case you have a problem at any time.

If you are on a placement with an overseas organisation you should get in touch with your key contact on your arrival and make sure that you know who to contact in the organisation with any queries or concerns you may have, and how to contact them.

It is important to find out the contact number of the Emergency Services and the local doctor in your host country. You may also need to contact the local British Embassy, www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations (hyperlink), or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), www.gov.uk/foreign-travel (hyperlink), in the event of an emergency.

Staff at the University of East Anglia will also be able to advise on a number of issues so remember to keep in touch with us.

Helpful contacts at UEA

- **Emergency contact number, UEA** – open at all times
Security + 44 (0)1603 592352
- **Dean of Students' Office, UEA** – open 9 am until 5 pm, Monday – Friday
Telephone + 44 (0)1603 592761 Email dos@uea.ac.uk
- **Study Abroad Office, UEA** – open 9 am until 5 pm, Monday – Friday
Telephone + 44 (0)1603 591871 Email studyabroad@uea.ac.uk
- **LTS Hubs, UEA** – open 8 am until 6 pm, Monday – Friday

ARTS1 Building LTS Hub +44 (0)1603 597580

Email arts1_ug.hub@uea.ac.uk

or arts1_pgt.hub@uea.ac.uk

Edith Cavell Building LTS Hub +44 (0)1603 597100

Email ECB_ug.hub@uea.ac.uk

Elizabeth Fry Building LTS Hub +44 (0)1603 597578

Email efb_ug.hub@uea.ac.uk

Zuckerman Institute Building LTS Hub +44 (0)1603 597581

Email zicer_pgt.hub@uea.ac.uk

Frequently asked questions

What do I do if I suddenly become ill or if I have an accident?

Depending on the severity of your illness or injuries, contact/visit the Emergency Services, local hospital or local doctor. If your illness/injury affects your ability to study please make sure that you seek advice from your host institution and inform both the Study Abroad Office and your LTS Hub at UEA.

My physical or mental/disability is affecting my studies. I am not getting the support that I expected and need. Who can I speak to?

The Wellbeing service in the Dean of Students' Office at UEA can support students who are in distress, going through difficult times and those with physical and mental health conditions. More information can be found on their webpages <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/dos/wellbeing> or you can email the team on disbility@uea.ac.uk or studentwellbeing@uea.ac.uk

I have been the victim of a crime. Who do I report this to and where can I get help?

Contact the local police and your key contact(s) at your host institution. Make sure that you obtain a police or crime number and report in case you require this for insurance purposes. The FCO also provides useful information for victims of crime on their website www.gov.uk/victim-crime-abroad

My passport/wallet/purse has been stolen. Who do I contact?

Contact the local police. The FCO provides useful information about lost or stolen passports. If you had a visa in your stolen passport, you should contact your host institution for advice on a replacement visa.

I have been accused of a crime. How do I get help?

Contact your host institution to find out where you can access help and representation. The Study Abroad Office, UEA, may also be able to advise on who you need to speak to.

I have a problem with my visa and/or passport and I need some help.

Get in touch with your key contact at your host institution. General information can be found on UEA's webpages <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/dos/international-students/visa-support> (hyperlink) and International Student Advisors in the Dean of Students' Office, UEA, will be able to advise you on immigration problems, email isat@uea.ac.uk

How do I get an emergency loan or advice about my finances?

You can access financial help and emergency loans from the Student Finance Team in the Dean of Students' Office at UEA. More information can be found on their webpages <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/dos/money-matters> and you can contact a Finance Advisor at fac@uea.ac.uk

I need some help with my studies/mark translations/academic requirements. Where should I go?

Speak to your adviser at your host institution. There are also resources that you can access from the Learning Enhancement Team, Dean of Students' Office, UEA, webpages https://www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/let/study_resources

I am unhappy with my university/placement. Who can I speak to?

Study Abroad Office and your LTS Hub, UEA. Contact details are above.

I need help translating a document/set of instructions.

Contact your host institution.

Who should my parents contact if they are concerned about my wellbeing?

The Dean of Students' Office, UEA, between 9 am and 5 pm and UEA Security outside of these times. Contact details are above.

The University is unable to share specific information with your parents without prior consent. We will be able to provide your parents with general information and advice, however, and liaise with your host institution when necessary.

Personal safety

When you are in a new environment and are unsure of your surroundings and culture it is especially important to take care. Research your new environment to make sure that you know of the areas to be aware of or to avoid. General safety guidance should be followed in the same way whether you are in the UK or abroad. Make sure that you know the number of a recommended local taxi company and keep this number in your phone. Do not, under any circumstances, walk on your own after dark in deserted areas.

Local laws

You are subject to the laws of the country that you are living in. Familiarise yourself with them before you leave the UK. For example, the drinking age is 21 in the United States and it is illegal to buy alcohol for anyone who is underage.

Useful things to do or know

- Check the FCO Travel Advice website before you leave.
- Email yourself a copy of your passport, visa, insurance details so that they are accessible from anywhere in the world.
- Leave a copy of your passport and details of your insurance including the policy number with someone at home.
- Make a note of your mobile phone IMEI and laptop serial number as you may need these in the event of a claim.
- Sign up to SKYPE/WHATSAPP or other sites that will allow you to send messages at a lower cost.

Note: Appendix 1 provided by Jane Amos (DOS) and Anne-Marie Bruner-Tracey (ARM). Please note that this is a first 'draft'.