EDUCATION ABROAD
STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM
PRE-DEPARTURE
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Check your ‘Letter of Offer’ from the host institution – Check that dates, courses and number of semesters are correct, if there are any problems contact the Education Abroad Office (EAO) immediately.

Accept your offer (if applicable) – Ensure you accept your offer at your host institution and complete all forms they require.

Passport – Apply for a current passport or renew your existing passport if the expiry date is less than six months after your program ends or when you plan to leave. [www.passports.gov.au](http://www.passports.gov.au)

Visa – Contact the relevant Embassy or Consulate to apply for the correct visa or entry permit for your exchange.

International students – You will require a letter from the Education Abroad Office to take to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)

Purchase airline ticket – Once you have accepted your offer at the host institution and obtained your visa, book your return flights.

Insurance – Purchase travel insurance. Purchase Health Cover if required.

Accommodation – Organise your accommodation for host country. If you are looking for accommodation when you arrive in your host country, make sure you book temporary accommodation for at least two weeks after your arrival.

Enrolment – Ensure your RMIT enrolment is correct. All Undergraduate and Postgraduate students should be enrolled in outbound exchange codes. Your School can supply you with these. If necessary, organise a Proxy to act on your behalf in case any RMIT administration matters need to be dealt with while you are on exchange.
- **Student agreement** – Return your signed agreement, including your insurance policy number, to the EAO before leaving Australia.

- **Organise money** – Organise enough money to cover expenses for the first week upon arrival. Check that you can use your Australian ATM cards overseas to access all accounts.

- **Centrelink** – If in receipt of Austudy, get a letter from EAO and notify Centrelink.

- **OS-HELP loan** – You can still apply for an OS HELP loan, please download the application form. http://mams.rmit.edu.au/431tnyifb851.pdf

- **Mobile phone** – Activate global roaming for mobile phone.

- **Travel advice** – Read the RMIT Travel Advice document, available from the EAO website www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=14yziborwifj1.

- **Doctor and dental** – Before you leave Australia visit your doctor and dentist for a check-up, and to enquire about any recommended vaccinations. If on medications obtain a letter from your Doctor outlining why you need the medication and ensure you have enough prescriptions to cover you for the length of your overseas stay.

- **Drivers license** – If you intend to drive while abroad you may need to obtain an international driving permit (IDP). These are available from RACV, check their website to see if you will need an IDP. www.racv.com.au

- **Taxation** – If you will be away through the end of the financial year, check with the Australian Taxation Office if you are required to complete any tax returns before you depart. www.ato.gov.au

- **Luggage** – Check luggage allowance (maximum weight and number of items for check-in and carry-on) with your airline. Check with customs what you can and can not take into the country.
Electrical – Check what the power source is at your host country and purchase an adaptor specific for that country.

Register with the Australian Consulate in your host country – you can do this on-line at www.dfat.gov.au

Important documents to take in your hand luggage
» airline tickets
» passport
» any relevant visa documents
» letter of offer from host institution
» birth certificate or country identification card
» international drivers licence and/or drivers licence from your home country
» academic transcripts
» information on airport pick up service if applicable
» accommodation details
» emergency contact details e.g. relatives, friends, government embassy in Australia.
» medical record (including blood type, medication details, and prescriptions if required)
» this booklet

It is important that you have all these documents with you throughout your stay overseas. We suggest that you put a second copy of each in your suitcase and leave a third copy at home with your family.

Take with you (or write in this booklet) the contact details of your Student Mobility Advisor at the EAO, RMIT Program Coordinator, host university Exchange Office or Advisor, bank in Australia, Centrelink Case Officer.
ON arrival
CHECKLIST

☐ Contact family to say that you arrived safely
☐ Contact international office at host institution and introduce yourself
☐ Change you address details on Enrolment Online
☐ Obtain local currency and open bank account
☐ Fax/Email Advice of Contact Details form back to the Education Abroad Office +61 3 9925 5235/eao@rmit.edu.au
☐ Write down emergency contact numbers to carry with you
  » local equivalent of 000
  » family
  » host university international office
  » Australian Embassy
  » RMIT
☐ Check orientation program
☐ Check enrolment arrangements
IMPORTANT CONTACTS
| Education Abroad Office | GPO Box 2476  
| Melbourne  
| VIC 3001  
| Fax: +61 3 9925 5235  
| eao@rmit.edu.au |
| --- | --- |
| Judi Cowie  
| Manager, International Mobility  
| Tel. +61 3 9925 9834  
| Email: judi.cowie@rmit.edu.au |
| Sofie Ham  
| Senior Coordinator, Student Mobility  
| Tel. +61 3 9925 2952  
| Sofie.ham@rmit.edu.au |
| Nina Guethert  
| Student Mobility Adviser  
| Austria, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Middle East, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, Vietnam  
| Tel. +61 3 9925 9980  
| nina.guethert@rmit.edu.au |
| Anielle Leung  
| Student Mobility Adviser  
| Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan  
| Tel. +61 3 9925 1020  
| anielle.leung@rmit.edu.au |
| Kate Rintoul  
| Student Mobility Adviser  
| Africa, Americas, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand  
| Tel. +61 3 9925 2809  
| kate.rintoul@rmit.edu.au |
| Zoe Lai  
| Mobility Officer  
| Tel. +61 3 9925 3947  
| i-lin.lai@rmit.edu.au |
| Catherine McConville  
| Administrative Office – Part Time  
| Tel. +6 1 3 9925 9035 |

**EMERGENCY DETAILS**

In an emergency the Education Abroad Office can be contacted on the following numbers

| Australian office hours | Tel. +61 3 9925 3947  
| Email: eao@rmit.edu.au |
| --- | --- |
| After hours (5.30pm to 8.30am weekdays and 24hrs on weekends) | Tel. +61 3 9925 3999 |
| DFAT Help 24-hour | Tel. +61 2 6261 3305 or 1300 555135 (local call cost within Australia) |
## USEFUL WEBSITES

### RMIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMIT University home page</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rmit.edu.au">www.rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Abroad Office website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rmit.edu.au/globalpassport/educationabroad">www.rmit.edu.au/globalpassport/educationabroad</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course guides</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/courses">www.rmit.edu.au/students/courses</a></td>
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### Travel information

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Training (DEEWR) – Study Overseas</td>
<td><a href="http://www.studyoverseas.gov.au">www.studyoverseas.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>STA Travel</td>
<td><a href="http://www.statravel.com.au">www.statravel.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Travel Doctor – vaccination advice and current health alerts</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tmvc.com.au">www.tmvc.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time OUT – a world-wide guide to entertainment</td>
<td><a href="http://www.timeout.com">www.timeout.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlapedia – key geographical information and statistics</td>
<td><a href="http://www.atlapedia.com/index/.html">www.atlapedia.com/index/.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Hostels International</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iyhf.org">www.iyhf.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Currency Converter</td>
<td><a href="http://www.xe.com/ucc/">www.xe.com/ucc/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather channel</td>
<td><a href="http://www.weather.com/twc/homepage.twc">www.weather.com/twc/homepage.twc</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely Planet guides</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lonelyplanet.com.au">www.lonelyplanet.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lets Go travel guides</td>
<td><a href="http://www.letsgo.com/">www.letsgo.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough Guide</td>
<td><a href="http://www.roughguides.com/">www.roughguides.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Airport</td>
<td><a href="http://www.melbourneairport.com.au">www.melbourneairport.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To check what you can take in your luggage</td>
<td><a href="http://travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au/">http://travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au/</a></td>
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### Government

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<th>Service</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dept of Foreign Affairs &amp; Trade (DAFT)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dfat.gov.au">www.dfat.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Passports</td>
<td><a href="http://www.passports.gov.au">www.passports.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFAT Travel Warnings/Smartraveller</td>
<td><a href="http://www.smartraveller.gov.au">www.smartraveller.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>US State Dept Travel Warnings</td>
<td><a href="http://travel.state.gov">http://travel.state.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel Advice</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/">www.fco.gov.uk/en/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Customs</td>
<td><a href="http://www.customs.gov.au">www.customs.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Centrelink</td>
<td><a href="http://www.centrelink.gov.au">www.centrelink.gov.au</a></td>
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## Australian media

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<th>Media</th>
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<tr>
<td>The ABC</td>
<td><a href="http://www.abc.net.au">www.abc.net.au</a></td>
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## MY CONTACTS

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Section 2

PREPARING FOR YOUR TIME ABROAD
RMIT Tuition Fees

While on exchange you do not pay tuition fees to your host institution. You will continue to pay tuition fees directly to RMIT under the same arrangements, e.g. HELP debt, up-front full fees. If there are any additional fees required by the host institution, such as health insurance, intensive language courses, fieldwork costs, materials fees, student association fees, these will need to be paid directly to your host institution.

If you over-enrol (more than the equivalent of 48 credit points) during your exchange you will be required to pay tuition fees to the host institution for the extra classes. You will also incur a HELP (or International or local full fees) debt for the extra classes if you wish to receive credit for them at RMIT. You must get permission from your host institution, the Education Abroad Office and the Program Coordinator in your School at RMIT if you wish to overload.

Change of address

As soon as you have secured accommodation at your exchange destination, please provide the Education Abroad Office with your new address by completing the Advise of Contact Details form. It is very important for RMIT to hold current contact information, including your local mobile phone number, for you in case of emergencies.

Student agreement

Read the RMIT Student Agreement document that you will receive from the EAO at the Pre-Departure Session and via email. Complete and return the Student Agreement form to the EAO before leaving Australia.

Enrolment

Although you will be studying at an overseas institution, you are still officially a student at RMIT. For this reason, you will need to ensure you are enrolled correctly at RMIT before you leave Australia and that you comply with all RMIT census dates (www.rmit.edu.au/students/importantdates) while overseas.

If you are an Undergraduate or Postgraduate student, please make an appointment with your Program Coordinator prior to departure to ensure you are enrolled correctly into the external exchange codes while you are on exchange. If you are a TAFE student or going to RMIT Vietnam, you must enrol in RMIT courses as usual. Incorrect enrolment can lead to difficulties obtaining credit for your overseas program on your return.

For the duration of your exchange program you are required to be enrolled in a full-time course load at RMIT and your host institution. This is a requirement of your exchange and a visa regulation. A full time load is generally 36–48 credit points (3–4 courses). The number of credit points that constitutes a full time load will also be determined by the requirements of your host institution.

Variations to your enrolment

If you need to make any changes to your approved study plan while you are away you must get approval from your school. This can be done by email or fax and you should keep all copies of correspondence between you and your school. It is your responsibility to advise your school of any variation to your original study plan so your enrolment can be amended. Failure to do this may result in paying for courses you did not undertake. Credit will not be transferred unless the new courses have been approved.
GETTING THERE

» Gain approval from your RMIT Program Coordinator before enrolling at your host institution in any subjects that do not appear on your approved study plan. This can be done by email and you should copy in your Student Mobility Advisor at the Education Abroad Office. Ensure your RMIT enrolment is correct if making any changes.

» Keep copies of any work completed while on exchange, such as syllabi, reading lists, papers and exams, so you have documentation in case any questions arise on your return.

Accommodation

If you have not organised your permanent accommodation prior to departure and will be looking for accommodation when you arrive in the host country, ensure you book at least two weeks temporary accommodation before you depart Australia.

Passport and Visas

Passport

You must ensure that you have a passport which will be valid for the duration of your stay overseas. You will be required to have additional six months validity from the date of intended departure from that country. Australian passports can take up to four weeks to be processed so if you need a new passport it would be best to organise well in advance. There is now a ‘streamlined’ renewal process to replace your passport visit www.passports.gov.au

Visa

You must ensure that you obtain the necessary visa or entry permit for the country you will be studying in and all the countries you will be going through before you leave Australia. Check the web to find the consulate or embassy in Australia for the country you will be travelling to, this site will then explain the entry requirements and visa application process if applicable. In some instances you will be required to make an appointment to apply for a visa. Make sure you read all instructions clearly and that you are applying for the correct visas, if unsure about anything phone the relevant consulate or embassy, do not make assumptions about any issue when it comes to immigration matters. www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html

If planning to obtain work while overseas, check what your work limitations are and if you will need to apply for a work permit.

Your Student Mobility Advisor at the Education Abroad Office may be able to provide general advice, but ultimately you are responsible for obtaining any necessary visas before your departure.
Dual citizenship
If you are a dual citizen and intend to travel with more than one passport check the following website for your travel responsibilities:

International students
International students must report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) with a status letter from RMIT at least 28 days before leaving Australia. Contact your Student Mobility Advisor at the Education Abroad Office to obtain a letter.

Permanent residents
If you have PR in Australia you must check whether your status will be affected if you leave Australia, you may need a Resident Return Visa (RPV).

Tickets and arrival
You are strongly advised not to make any non-refundable payments for airline tickets or accommodation prior to receiving your written acceptance from your host institution. When booking your flights, it is recommended you aim to arrive no later than one week before orientation.

Insurance

Travel Insurance

Obtaining Travel Insurance is compulsory if you wish to go on exchange.

Unfortunately, things can and do go wrong when travelling overseas. You could fall ill or have an accident; you could have money or luggage stolen; your visit might be cancelled or cut short through injury or illness; your family may need to fly out to be with you in case there is a serious incident. Costs can easily run into thousands of dollars, particularly when it comes to medical expenses or hospital care. All these risks and more can be covered by insurance.

The cost of travel insurance varies widely, so shop around to find a good price and the right product. Remember that a cheaper policy may have less cover.

» Determine if the policy meets your anticipated needs. Note that you may not be able to purchase travel insurance once you have left Australia. Make sure you purchase enough travel insurance to cover your exchange and a little extra time for travel and extension of stay.

» Please note that travel insurance is NOT the same as health insurance. Some travel insurance packages will offer additional health coverage but you should be clear about the details of your coverage if you purchase these packages.

» If anything does happen, make sure you keep as much paperwork as possible – tickets, receipts, medical bills, police reports etc to prove your claim.
Know what your policy covers

Check that the cover is adequate. If in doubt ask your insurer. Your policy should cover the following:

» The whole time that you are away, whether that is a day or a whole year.

» Any activities and sports you might do. Some activities are excluded from many policies – snowboarding, adventure tourism for example. Many insurers will extend cover, if requested, otherwise shop around for a specialist policy.

» The level of medical and health cover is very important. It must include cover for emergency medical treatment, hospitalisation and repatriation.

» Personal liability – for injury or damage to others and their property.

» Cancellation – if you have to abandon your trip. Cancellation cover should start as soon as you book your trip.

» 24-hour emergency service and assistance. If things go wrong the assistance company will help you to sort everything out.

» Possessions cover, including money and documents.

» Personal accident – money paid on death or permanent disability.

» Legal expenses – to help you pursue compensation for damages following personal injury.

Check the conditions and exclusions

» If you are in any doubt, contact your insurer to find out exactly what cover you have.

» Most policies will not cover drink or drug-related incidents.

» You must take reasonable care of your possessions, or your policy will not cover you.

» Acts of War (Terrorism) may cancel your insurance cover.

» Declare anything that you think might affect the cover

Be honest—tell your insurer about current or past medical conditions. If you don’t declare something you may invalidate your policy.

When you travel...

» Make sure you take your policy and the 24-hour emergency phone number with you. Notify the Education Abroad Office of your insurance policy number and provider.

» Make sure you know what to do in the event of a problem.

» Some insurance companies insist that you call their assistance company as soon as possible after a problem arises.
Health Insurance

» Are there requirements outlined in your host institutions’ acceptance package stating compulsory health insurance is required to obtain your visa?

» Some foreign governments and institutions will not accept alternative health insurance plans other than those they specify. Make sure you check for these restrictions before making unnecessary, expensive purchases of insurance coverage from Australia.

» If you can apply for a waiver for the overseas health insurance, because you have health insurance from a provider in Australia that will cover you whilst you are overseas, make sure that the insurance is recognised by the host institution.

» If you purchase health insurance in Australia to cover you whilst overseas, make sure you are clear about everything you are covered for, e.g. medical repatriation, access to medical specialists etc. Also, be clear about claim procedures – do you pay up front, what percentage do you pay?

» If you currently have private health insurance cover in Australia, but cannot obtain a waiver from your host institution, ask your insurer if they can suspend your cover for six-months/one-year without penalty.

» If you purchase health insurance from your host institution, check that it will cover you during holiday periods and/or outside the host country if you plan to travel.

» If you apply for insurance from your host institution, do not pay late. You may be hit with extra charges. You may also have your enrolment cancelled or results withheld.

» Reciprocal healthcare arrangements exist between Australia and some other countries including Finland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These may allow you to access the health care systems of these countries. More information is available at www.hic.gov.au. Follow the links through “Services for Travellers”.

Keep in mind that reciprocal healthcare arrangements do not cover your travel between Australia and your host country. You will need travel insurance for that.

Packing

There are very strict guidelines in what you can take overseas; in carry on and in check-in luggage. Please see the following website for what you can and can’t take: http://travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au

Pack light, remember, you can always buy what you didn’t take once you arrive overseas i.e. toiletries. There are regulations on how much weight you can carry, dependant on what type of ticket you buy, this is generally 20 klg for check-in and 7 klg’s for carry on but check with your airline before packing or purchasing suitcases. It is a good idea to tie a coloured ribbon around your suitcase for easy identification when you collect your bags, a lot of people own black suitcases! It is up to you if you want to put locks on your bags, if you are travelling to the USA you will need to make sure they are TSA approved locks so they won’t be cut off at customs in the USA.

Pack personal items in your carry-on luggage including copies of all important documents. If you can fit it in, take a change of clothes in case your luggage goes missing.

Never carry packages for strangers.
Other items to include

» Converter/Adapter for all electronic needs. If you will be travelling in several countries buy a universal adapter.
» Rail passes, they are cheaper when bought from Australia
» Laptop
» Travel diary or journal
» This Pre-Departure handbook so you have all your contact numbers with you
» Youth Hostel membership card and ISIC Card
» Money belt
» Photos of family and friends

OS-HELP Loan

You can still apply for an OS-HELP Loan as long as all applications are completed before you go on exchange. Application forms are available from the Education Abroad Office or to download on the following website: www.rmit.edu/globalpassport/financialsupport

Eligibility:

» be an Australian citizen or the holder of a permanent humanitarian visa and
» not have received OS-HELP on more than one other occasion; and
» be enrolled in an undergraduate course of study at RMIT, and
» be a Commonwealth-supported student; and
» have already completed the equivalent of at least two full-time semesters of study (96 credit points) towards your course of study and
» be enrolled in full-time study with an overseas higher education institution for which you will be outside Australia while undertaking the study; and
» have your overseas study count as credit for their RMIT course; and
» still have the equivalent of one full-time semester of study (48 credit points) to complete in your RMIT course upon return.

If you are studying two semesters overseas and need a second loan, you will need to contact the EAO to apply just before the commencement of your second semester.

Please see further eligibility criteria on the OS-HELP Information and Application form.
**Centrelink Payments—Austudy/Youth Allowance/Abstudy**

If you are currently receiving any of the above benefits you should still be eligible to receive payments whilst on exchange. You will need to supply Centrelink with a letter from the EAO to advise that (1) you are studying overseas on an official RMIT University Student Exchange Program; (2) you will remain enrolled at RMIT and; (3) will receive full credit for studies completed at the host institution. Please make arrangements with the EAO to issue a letter for Centrelink if required. For further information contact Centrelink: Tel: 132 490 or www.centrelink.gov.au

Austudy and Youth Allowance recipients should take note that the full amount of University funding (Travel Grants etc.) **MUST be included as “assessable income” for the purposes of the Austudy/Youth Allowance student income test, except for that portion (if any) of the award which is used for the purposes of reimbursement of educational expenses (e.g. tuition fees, some travel costs etc). Please check with Centrelink for updated information about their policies as these are subject to change.**

If you are currently receiving the ‘at home’ Youth Allowance rate, you may be eligible for an increased allowance. If you are not currently receiving any benefits you may be eligible for the Rent Assistance. Please check with your Centrelink office. www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/international/temporary.htm

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**Taxation**

The Australian Taxation Office (Tel: 131 681) considers University scholarships and grants as an ex-gratia payment (given that there are no services rendered) and as such, need not be declared as “income” for taxation purposes. www.ato.gov.au/

Please check with ATO for updated information about their policies as these are subject to change.

If you are going to be away through the end of a financial year, ensure that you have completed the necessary tax returns required of you. Contact the ATO for further information.

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**Banks and money**

Have sufficient local currency on arrival for immediate expenses such as taxis, accommodation deposits and food. Most International Airports have money exchanges or change some Australian dollars a few days before you leave.

Find out what services are available with your Australian ATM and credit cards and if they can be used overseas. Ask if there are any PIN requirements. Check if your cards can be used on the Cirrus and/or Maestro networks. Check what conversion fees your bank will charge if you use your card or make cash withdrawals. If using your credit card while overseas advise your bank that you will be travelling so they don’t stop your card due to ‘unusual transactions’. Irregular shaped cards such as Virgin may not work in ATMs overseas (check with your credit provider).

If using travellers cheques keep a list of the cheque numbers separate to the cheques, maybe leave a copy of the numbers at home with copies of other important documents.
Vaccinations and Medication

Before your departure, contact your doctor for advice about what immunisations are recommended in the foreign countries you plan to visit or check for yourself at the “Travel Doctor” website: www.tmvc.com.au. Also read the information on Smartraveller ‘Travel Well’: www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html

If you have specific medical needs, you should check with your doctor whether the treatment or medication you need is available in the host country. Any large amounts of medication taken with you will need to be accompanied by a letter from your doctor detailing what the medication contains and what it is treating.

Safety and Security

While no level of preparation can prevent all problems from occurring in any environment, taking proper precautions will help avert a number of potentially worrying and dangerous situations. Please see below for a list of precautionary measures that should be implemented during your time abroad.

» Organise global roaming for your Australian mobile so that you can make and receive calls overseas.

» Make several copies of all travel documents, including your passport, plane tickets, insurance documents, credit cards and travellers cheques. You will need to keep these copies in a safe place separate from the originals, it is suggested you also leave a copy at home, or email copies to yourself.

» Make a note of local emergency telephone numbers in the host country, e.g. Police, Ambulance, Australian embassy.

» Avoid participation in any political activities in the countries you visit.

» Be aware that many thefts occur on crowded public transport. Carry any bags in front of you at all times and never keep your wallet or purse in your back pocket.

» Avoid openly displaying signs of wealth.

In a world where sudden events can make travel arrangements uncertain it is very important that you are sensible, take precautions where you can, and be prepared as much as possible.

Make sure that someone at home has your detailed itinerary and inform them of changes. It is particularly important for family to be aware of your flights and accommodation details.

» Always use your RMIT student email address and ensure that your friends and family know the address.

» Re-confirm flights just in case flights are overbooked.

» Take out maximum insurance even where the company excludes “Acts of Terrorism”, “Acts of God”, or “Acts of War”.

» Co-operate with airport security measures; do not joke about having a gun, bomb or drugs in your luggage as this will be taken seriously and they may prevent you from boarding your plane. An Australian citizen was jailed for 2 months in Toronto in September 2001, for joking he had a bomb in his luggage.
Do not carry objects in your carry-on luggage that may not pass metal detectors – it wastes everybody’s time, and makes other people nervous.

If you take regular medication, ensure you have more than enough for the estimated time away from home in case of delays. Take copies of your prescriptions and a letter from your Doctor advising why you need to have the prescriptions.

If you are Diabetic and need to take needles onto the plane contact the airport at least a few weeks before your departure to find out what you need to do.

Pick itineraries sensibly, and stay abreast of current news.

Heed the travel advisories issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. These are constantly updated. Australian advisories may be sourced from: www.smarttraveller.gov.au

Non-Australian citizens should consult the websites of their home country foreign affairs departments to check for warnings specific to their nationals.

It may also be prudent to monitor the US State Department or the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advisories, which are accessible as a hot link from the DFAT site. http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html

Emergencies

Emergencies often arise while travelling. They can include illness, accidents, natural disasters, political instability or terrorism. It is essential that all students on RMIT overseas programs be prepared for any emergency. Work out an ‘exit plan’ with your family in case you need to leave your host country early. Your plan should include contacting the Education Abroad Office to advise us of your situation and to request assistance.

Upon arrival register with the Australian Consulate in your host country – you can do this on-line at www.dfat.gov.au

The following check-list will assist you in developing an emergency response plan for use in the event that you find yourself in a threatening or critical situation.

For immediate action

Register with the Australian embassy in your host county to advise them of your whereabouts and contact details. This can be done online at www.smartraveller.gov.au/getting_help_overseas.html

Non-Australian citizens should register with the Embassy or diplomatic representative of their home country.


Monitor developments through embassy, media and web resources.

Keep up your local contact networks, stay in touch with your host, student friends or trusted locals, and hotel/hostel staff.
» Maintain contact in Australia, with the Education Abroad Office and your school’s Program Coordinator.

» Maintain family contacts at home, providing reassurance and advising them of your contact details and plans.

» Monitor your email regularly - remember to check your RMIT and private email accounts. The Education Abroad Office will deliver any advice via email to your student email account.

» Be cautious, be prepared.

**Planning an emergency response**

» Evaluate your options – stay put; move to safer location, or return to Australia as soon as possible.

» Make sure you know the emergency telephone number for the country you are in and program it into your mobile (if that works where you are).

» Make sure you know the location of the nearest doctor and hospital.

» Make such decisions in collaboration with your RMIT Program Coordinator, the on-site coordinator at your host institution, the Education Abroad Office and the embassy in your host country.

» Communicate your plans and movements to your family, your Program Coordinator and the Education Abroad Office.

**RMIT Support and Travel Advisories**

» While all RMIT students are responsible for their own safety overseas, the Education Abroad Office monitors international developments which may affect the safety and welfare of RMIT exchange students, particularly changes in DFAT travel advice, and will advise students of any relevant information.

» Students may seek advice from the Education Abroad Office at any time before or during their overseas program.

» In the event of an emergency such as a terrorist incident or natural disaster in a country where RMIT students are currently participating in a RMIT program, or planning to do so, the Education Abroad Office will ensure that all students are contacted and will provide advice about what action students should take.

» RMIT advises that at all times students should follow Australian DFAT travel advice and/or advice issued by local diplomatic representatives.

» If DFAT issues advice not to travel to any country (i.e. a level 5 DFAT travel advice) RMIT University may cancel the participation of any student who is currently undertaking a RMIT program in that country or is planning to do so. In this event, the University expects you to depart the country immediately at your own expense.
In an emergency, the Education Abroad Office can assist you to establish embassy contact, maintain contact with host institution networks, communicate with family and coordinate travel arrangements.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides consular services to Australians through Australian Embassies, High Commissions or Consulates in most countries. Any Australian national who gets into difficulty overseas can seek help from the nearest Australian diplomatic mission 24 hours a day. Where there is no Australian representative in a country, Australian nationals may instead contact the nearest Canadian mission in that country. Please check the following website to find out what they can and cannot assist you with: www.rmit.edu.au/globalpassport/traveladvice

Often your travel insurance provider will also offer an emergency assistance number. Make sure you carry this number (and your policy number) with you at all times.

» Utilise the RMIT website for contact details of Program Coordinators

» Australian Embassy details can be found at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website: www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html. Australian diplomatic representatives can assist with emergency passports/travel documents; medical or legal support; limited financial assistance and help during emergencies. Keep the diplomatic representative informed of any unusual or unexpected travel you may undertake.

» Non-Australian citizens should check with the website of the Foreign Affairs departments of their home country to ascertain contact details in their host country.

» Latest travel advice
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel advice: www.smartraveller.gov.au

» Media
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation: www.abc.net.au/news
- Reuters: www.reuters.com

Embassies and Consulates of Non-Australian Citizens

It is usual for most countries to offer similar services to their nationals. If you are a Non-Australian citizen you should ascertain the level of representation and assistance that may be available to you during your stay in your host country.

CONTACT DETAILS

In an emergency the Education Abroad Office can be contacted on the following numbers

Australian office hours:
+61 3 9925 3947
Email: eao@rmit.edu.au

After hours (5.30pm to 8.30am weekdays and 24hrs on weekends):
+61 3 9925 3999

DFAT Help 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre:
+61 2 6261 3305 or 1300 555135 (local call cost within Australia)
WHILE AWAY...

‘Those who visit foreign nations but not their customs; as empty as their pockets travelled bodies but their own countrymen, change their climate and with their heads return home with untravelled minds.’

Anonymous
Orientation

As soon as you have settled into your accommodation, check-in with the International Coordinator at your host institution. If they are running an orientation, make sure you attend. Orientations are lot of fun and the best way to meet friends quickly. For some institutions, orientation will be compulsory.

Enrolment

You will also need to enrol in your courses at your host institution, this is normally done during orientation or just after. If unsure, speak to your International Coordinator. Remember, your must be enrolled at RMIT and your host institution while you are away, and must still adhere to the RMIT census dates when making any changes to your enrolment, or enrolling for your next semester back at RMIT.

Adjusting to culture shock

What is culture shock?

Culture shock is the name given to a feeling of disorientation, loneliness, insecurity or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves for a period of time into a culture that is different from his or her own. Culture shock does not only occur after prolonged interpersonal contact with people who are culturally different. Even in countries where English is spoken as the first language and things may seem similar to home, there are still significant differences in the culture. For some, the absence of familiar foods or the need to become accustomed to different sleeping habits can be enough to cause culture shock.

Culture shock can cause intense discomfort and is often accompanied by hyper-irritability, bitterness, resentment, homesickness, and even depression. The following is a list of some of the symptoms of culture shock:

» Homesickness
» Boredom
» Withdrawal/isolation
» Need for excessive amounts of sleep
» Irritability
» Stereotyping of host nationals
» Hostility toward host nationals

For some people, culture shock is brief and hardly noticeable. It is normal to experience some level of culture shock in your first weeks. For others, culture shock is something that they have to deal with over several weeks, but there are some things you can do to help acclimatise.

Overseas success requires adjusting to the differences between your own culture and a host culture, successfully performing your tasks in the new culture and establishing intercultural interaction. Adjusting to such a different situation requires a receptive, uncritical attitude, sensibility, inventiveness and originality.

Do not travel with misconceptions or stereotypes! Be prepared to find everything quite different from what you expected, including study. Do not expect the Australian way to prevail!

Go abroad informed about Australia. Be prepared to answer questions about Australian society and life in general.
Be flexible. Do not have rigid preconceptions of what you will find. Be ready to adapt yourself to another culture. You will enjoy the experience.

Be sensitive to the new cultural cues you will be receiving. Keep an open mind. Remember that you are the stranger and that the burden of adaptation is on you!

Your overall experience will depend on you and what you make of your time abroad.

Know the host country. Learn as much as possible about where you are planning to go.

Above all, have faith in yourself, in the good will of your hosts and in the positive outcome of the experience.

Stereotypes
When you travel abroad keep in mind that people who do not know many Australians personally may tend to judge the Australians they meet casually by a stereotyped standard..."All Australians are big beer drinkers...say G'day Mate...are laid-back...have kangaroos...etc." When you recognise that you are being judged by an inaccurate stereotype, try to avoid becoming angry or defensive. Just be yourself and hope that your behaviour may positively change other people's judgement of you and of other Australians they meet. And remember, stereotypes work both ways...you, most likely, have prejudgements of other nationalities. Try to remain open to the likelihood that these views are also inaccurate.

Students also should know that it will not last forever – you will get used to your new surroundings.

Stay in touch
As soon as you arrive ring home (or Skype) to let your loved ones know you have arrived. If you can, stay in regular contact, this will reduce homesickness.

Don’t forget to use the services offered by your host institution. They will have counselling services available but you can also just call in for a chat with the International Coordinator.

If after a few weeks you are still feeling homesick, or are depressed phone the Education Abroad Office (we can ring you straight back) to have a chat.

Extending your stay
If you wish to stay on at your host institution for a second semester then you will first need permission from the host institution and from the Education Abroad Office. If you have approval, you will then need to do another study plan and have it approved by your School at RMIT. This can be done by email, but remember to keep copies of all correspondence.

Do not leave the above process to the last minute, or change flights or accommodation bookings until you have approval from all areas and your new study plan approved.
RETURNING HOME...
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND QUARANTINE

Australia has extremely strict policies and laws governing what you can and cannot bring into Australia. Please remember to pack receipts and other relevant documentation to assist Australian Customs with assessing customs duty/sales tax on items you may have purchased overseas. All plant and animal products brought into Australia must be declared or you risk facing large fines.

More information about quarantine issues can be found on the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service website at www.affa.gov.au

For further information about customs regulations, please see the Australian Customs Service website: www.customs.gov.au

RECEIVING CREDIT FOR YOUR STUDIES

Exchange partner universities will usually send your official transcript for your exchange semester(s) directly to the Education Abroad Office at RMIT. The EAO will then send your transcript to your Program Coordinator/School Administration Manager for evaluation and result amendment. You will be contacted by the EAO to collect the original copy of your transcript.

If your transcript is sent directly to you, please provide a copy to the EAO as soon as possible to ensure credits are transferred in a timely fashion.

Although the transcript from your host institution will show that your courses have been graded, RMIT will record ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ results for all exchange subjects -

EPG – External Pass Grade
EFG – External Fail Grade

Please note that host institutions will not release transcripts to students who have any outstanding fees, such as library fines, student fees or re-issuance of student ID cards. Please ensure any outstanding fees are paid prior to the end of your exchange semester so that your transcript can be released as soon as possible.
RMIT EXCHANGE CLUB

The RMIT Exchange Club is open to all prospective, current and past exchange students. The Student Exchange Club hosts a number of events and activities throughout each semester and is a great opportunity to meet international students who are currently on exchange at RMIT and RMIT students who have returned from an overseas exchange. For more information contact EAO.

TRAVEL REPORT

When you return you will be asked to write a short report (300 – 500 words) on your experiences overseas, such as the benefits to you academically, personally and culturally; tips for future students going to the same institution and country; information about the institution etc. The reports may include photos and will be made available to other RMIT students considering an exchange program.

Please note: it is a requirement of the exchange program that all students write a Travel Report upon return from exchange. Examples of past students’ reports may be viewed at www.rmit.edu.au/globalpassport/testimonials

RMIT PHOTO COMPETITION

Capture your Exchange Experience! Don’t just tell us what a great time you had—Show us!

Entries must include at least 3 photos relevant to your time spent on exchange. Get creative. Your shots may incorporate your host institution, local culture, host city or that one in a life time experience.

Please see EAO website for details. www.rmit.edu.au/globalpassport/photocompetition
FOR MORE INFORMATION

RMIT University
Education Abroad Office
City Campus, Building 15 (off Bowen Lane)
Ground Floor, 124 La Trobe Street
Tel: 9925 3947  |  Fax: 9925 5235
Email: eao@rmit.edu.au

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this publication is accurate and current at the date of printing. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the RMIT University web site before lodging your application.
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