Assisting Students with Disabilities on Study Abroad Programs

Irene Scott, M.A.
Program Manager
Texas A&M University Education Abroad

Matthew Rader, Ed.D.
Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
IES Abroad
Housekeeping Items

• Stephanie Rock, Associate Dean of Students at IES Abroad, will be monitoring our Zoom Webinar today. If problems arise, please place your question or concern in the question tab of Zoom Webinar.

• A recording of this presentation will be provided to all registrants that includes captioning in the near future.

• Should we not be able to answer any of your questions during this webinar, we will respond to your question in the next few days.
Questions in Zoom

- What challenges have you experienced in accommodating students with disabilities on study abroad programs?
- What concerns do you have about assisting students with disabilities?
### Ten-Year Demographic History of Students with Disabilities – IIE Data

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#### Type of Disability

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#### # of Institutions Reporting Disability Status

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**TOTAL**

| Year | 241,791 | 262,416 | 260,327 | 270,604 | 273,996 | 283,332 | 289,408 | 304,467 | 313,415 | 325,339 | 332,727 | 341,751 |

* Reported for the first time in 2006/07.

** Starting in 2015/16 Autism Spectrum Disorder and Chronic Health Disorder were reported separately.
Types of Disabilities - Students

Among those institutions that know the specific disability of the study abroad participants, the breakdown is:

- Learning Disability (33.5%)
- Mental Disability (35.0%)
- Physical Disability (4.1%)
- Sensory Disability (3.1%)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (2.2%)*
- Chronic Health Disorder (16.1%)*
- Other Disability (6.0%)

https://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/opendoorstats
Legal cases involving Students with Disabilities

Bird v. Lewis and Clark College
- Student who used wheelchair in Australia
- Extraterritoriality upheld by federal district court and later rescinded (Lewis and Clark College sponsored program, provided faculty) fiduciary responsibility determined

Arizona State University
- Deaf student requested interpreter in Ireland
- Office of Civil Rights found that extraterritoriality did not apply because ASU did not operate program

College of St. Scholastica
- Deaf student needed interpreter in Ireland
- Office of Civil Rights found that Section 504 applied to its program in Ireland

St. Louis University
- Student with learning disability requested Macintosh computer in Spain (he had access to an IBM computer)
- Office of Civil Rights (OCR) found that Section 504 may apply extraterritoriality but student was reasonably accommodated
Terms to know: Americans with Disabilities Act

• **A person with a disability** is “one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., learning).” Excludes temporary disabilities.

• **Otherwise qualified** means one who “meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation.”

• **Accommodations** are modifications that provide people with disabilities “equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of accomplishment.”

• **Reasonable** accommodations do not fundamentally alter the essential requirements of a course or program or create an undue burden on the provider of the accommodation.

• **Functional limitation** refers to the barrier to equal access caused by the person’s disability.
What are Reasonable Accommodations?

• A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, job, facility, or activity that enables a qualified person with a disability to have an equal opportunity. Institutions are obligated to make reasonable accommodations only to known limitations of an otherwise qualified individual.

• Reasonable accommodations should not alter a course's essential components or in any way "water down" the curriculum or the standards of the institution.
Universal Instructional Design

A curb cut

- One successful model for good teaching is called Universal Instructional Design, or UID. The UID model states, “curriculum should include alternatives to make it accessible and appropriate for individuals with different backgrounds, learning styles, abilities, and disabilities in widely varied learning contexts.

- A curb cut makes it easier for a person using a wheelchair to get from the street to the sidewalk—but that same curb cut is also used by people pushing strollers, the elderly, or people pulling luggage. It's a design feature that is universal in its approach to access.
Essential Components Defined

- Essential components are the outcomes (including skills, knowledge, and attitudes) all students must demonstrate with or without using accommodations that are to be evaluated in a nondiscriminatory manner. In other words, some students might use accommodations and some might not, but all students must achieve the same outcomes. Process is important, of course, but not necessarily essential. Focusing on course outcomes will help define a course’s essential components.
Essential Components Defined - Continued

It is important to allow some flexibility in getting to the outcomes. For example, a student who has the use of only one hand may still give a patient an injection, although the student might need to use different procedures to achieve this outcome. Or, a student with a panic disorder may be unable to give a class presentation but may give the presentation privately to the instructor. The accommodation in this example is the private nature of the presentation; the essential component, the presentation, remains.
When Does ADA Apply to Study Abroad?

• When a U.S. institution is solely teaching the course or planning the activity.

• When a student is directly enrolled at a university outside the U.S., the U.S. institution needs to provide assistance with making accommodations. The U.S. institution is not required to provide the same level of care in these situations. Laws of the host country change the application of ADA abroad.
How are U.S. Disability Services Supporting Students in Study Abroad?

While more study abroad and disability offices are collaborating together on campuses, there are still questions that come up that need outside input. Here are some topics that come up the most in seeking solutions:

- 15% Logistics for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Study Abroad Students
- 12% Logistics for Study Abroad Students with Mobility Disabilities
- 12% Policy & Procedures for Study Abroad
- 10% Legal & Liability Issues in Study Abroad
- 7% Logistics for Study Abroad Students with Non-Apparent Disabilities
- 5% Who Pays for Disability Accommodations Abroad
- 5% Logistics for Blind and Low Vision Study Abroad Students
- 4% International Student Related (not study abroad but incoming students)
- 4% How to Encourage Students to Go Abroad
- 4% Disability Contacts for Travel

Based on 356 requests to the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange between October 1998 to June 2015. 75% of the requests came after 2008. See more: https://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/USstudentsatisfaction
Program Models

• Led by faculty/student leaders/student organization
• Coordinated by another U.S. institution/provider
• Direct enrollment/exchange with an international institution
• Intern/service-learning/research/volunteer (independent/provider coordinated)
• Virtual international experiences
Programming Aspects to Consider

- Housing
- Mobility
- Medication
- Excursions
- Meals
- In-country support
- Learning
- Pace
Navigating Accommodation Requests: Guiding Principles

- Inclusive institutional policies
- It is a community responsibility
- Advance planning and collaboration are essential
- Access to assistance is not retroactive

Sources: Diversity Abroad Network – Advising Guide for Students with Disabilities; NAFSA publication - Education abroad advising to students with disabilities
Accommodating Education Abroad Students with Disabilities at Texas A&M

- ADHD
- Autism
- Deaf/Blind
- Health related
- Hearing/Deaf
- Intellectual
- Learning
- Mental Health
- Physical
- Special Impairment
- Temporary
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual/Blind

Sources: Texas A&M Disability Resources (https://disability.tamu.edu/?s=stat#DiagnosesByCa); Texas A&M Education Abroad Overview (http://accountability.tamu.edu/All-Metrics/Mixed-Metrics/Study-Abroad-Overview)
Accommodation Process at Texas A&M

- **Encourage early disclosure**
  - Intake form (walk-in advising)
  - Fair materials (series of identity brochures with questions to ask)
  - Website (Diversity & Identity Abroad)
  - Program description include essential eligibility criteria
  - Application (Emergency Contact, Medical Information, & Medical Consent questionnaire)
  - Post-acceptance follow-up
  - Pre-departure resources and orientation
Accommodation Process at Texas A&M continued

- Establish **liaisons** in Disability Resources and Education Abroad to share list of students who may need accommodations, refine processes, and be a resource.

- **Cross train staff** on ‘talking points.’
  - Conversation Guide for Access Coordinators (adapted from University of Michigan’s Travel Health Preparation Guide)
  - Conversation Guide for Education Abroad staff

- **Disability Resources liaison** facilitates a follow-up with the student and provides next steps to secure accommodations.

- Designated program-specific **Education Abroad contact** facilitates a follow-up with the student as well.
Accommodation Process at Texas A&M continued

- When needed, a meeting is coordinated among students’ Access Coordinator in Disability Resources, program contact(s), students, and Education Abroad contact to finalize an action plan.

- Conduct cost analysis of increase in expenses for necessary accommodations, as well as discuss auxiliary aids vs. personal aids.

- Identify funds to offset the expense for necessary accommodations. Sources might include support from Disability Resources’ budget, cost-sharing with academic departments and Division of Student Affairs.
Roles and Responsibilities

Program Participant
• Disclose needs to facilitate access to accommodations.
• Research location to develop realistic expectations.
• Complete pre-departure preparations and program requirements.
• Advocate needs throughout the planning process.

Disability Resources Office
• Clarify institutional responsibility.
• Help student identify best accommodation choices.
• Do best to arrange and fund whatever accommodation is needed as if student is studying on campus. Students must not be charged for necessary accommodations.

Program Leader
• Clarify course requirements (credit-bearing programs).
• Provide course materials in accessible format.
• Identify available in-country support services (if applicable).
• Identify alternative excursions (if applicable).
Roles and Responsibilities continued

Education Abroad Office

• Assess student’s interest and goals.
• Facilitate follow-up with student in the event of disclosure.
• Inform appropriate parties with student’s permission.
• Address cultural and/or logistical concerns.
• Document actions taken.

Host Institution and/or On-Site Contact

• Provide information about program logistics.
• Assist with student’s academic and cultural adjustment.
• Assist with access to classes, excursions, and housing.
• Facilitate awareness training to parties involved.
Sample Program Accommodations Arranged by the Home Institution

● Quiet test environment
● Extended testing time
● Provide course materials in alternative format
● Arrange American Sign Language interpreter
● Arrange flexible schedules
● Collaborate with on-site staff to identify academic resources
● Collaborate with on-site staff to identify medical resources
Sample Program Arrangements by Student

- Shipping special equipment
- Quarantine of service animal
- Verify available services and airline regulations
- Verify whether medications are legal in host country
- Finalize treatment plan with medical professional
- Liaise with program coordinator about available services in host country
Case Study
Student - Anvi

• Anvi arrives in your office and states she wants to study abroad in Bonn, Germany.

• Anvi states she wants to live in a homestay in Germany.

• Anvi selects a program in Germany that has extensive travel as part of the academic program.

• Anvi arrives onsite and the host institution does not provide accommodations promised. She has contacted you for resolution to her concerns. She is considering returning home.
Recap: Best Practices

• Create an advising plan and cross-train staff.
• Foster early disclosure. It takes 4 – 6 months to set up accommodations.
• Develop linkages with individuals in key offices and community contacts.
• Brainstorm key questions to ask to determine level of program accessibility.
• Provide resources addressing accessibility in study abroad.
• Be flexible. Just because it has never been done, it does not mean it is impossible.

Final Points

• There is no “one size fits all” approach to accommodating students with disabilities.
• The planning process is a collaborative effort.
• Empower students to play a role in raising awareness.
• Availability of accommodations will depend on program structure, the student’s need, and host country.
Resources

● Mobility International USA
  o http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/assessmentforms
  o http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/personalassistant
  o http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/physicaldisability
  o https://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/10steps
  o https://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/virtualaccessibility

● Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

● Diversity Abroad
  o https://www.diversitynetwork.org/ (website for professionals, need membership to access the advising manuals)
  o https://www.diversityabroad.com/ (website for students)

● DO-IT https://www.washington.edu/doit/
● Association of International Educators (NAFSA)
● Forum on Education Abroad
● Terra Dotta e-books/blog posts
Final Thoughts, Questions, and Discussion

Texas A&M University Education Abroad
Irene Scott, M.A.
Program Manager
isscott@tamu.edu

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Matthew Rader, Ed.D.
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mrader@iesabroad.org