

# Study Abroad Accommodations

## Overview

Study abroad experiences broaden students' horizons, providing them with exposure to other cultures and languages. In today's global marketplace these experiences often increase a person's employability. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing, like their hearing peers, are increasingly seeking out these opportunities to broaden their repertoire of marketable skills.

## Are institutions required to provide accommodations for students in study abroad programs?

The answer to this question is complicated at best. As a service, program or activity sponsored by the college, a study abroad program falls within the mandates of both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. However, case law and OCR (Office of Civil Rights) decisions are vague. Factors that influence decisions center on:

- From where the program is originating – is the sponsoring entity an American institution or a foreign institution or program?
- The purpose of the program – is it a graduation requirement or an extracurricular activity sponsored by an outside entity?
- In the event the student is required to apply to an out-of-country institution, who is requiring it – the American institution or the out-of-country institution?

While the recent ADA Amendments offer no clarification with respect to whether the ADA and Section 504 apply to programs taking place outside of

the United States, institutions that administer study abroad programs should make decisions and accommodations with the presumption that these laws apply.



## What is the first step in planning for study abroad?

Plan early!

This gives everyone time to address concerns, work out details, and acquire funding to make study abroad a success for everyone. Since each study abroad program is unique, there are no best practices for planning accommodations. How accommodations are determined at the home institution should be helpful in guiding how accommodations are determined abroad.

Based on the student's required accommodations, the student, the disability office and the study abroad office should work together to ascertain such factors as:

- Who is responsible for investigating and providing assistive listening devices that will work outside the U.S?
- What will the interpreter or speech-to-text service provider's contract include? Should things such as travel time, meals and transportation be covered? Should the provider be paid an hourly or flat fee?

## Study Abroad Accommodations

- Will a team of providers be needed?
- How will accommodations after hours or for social activities be handled?

### Study Abroad- From Theory into Practice

China, Thailand, Germany, and South Africa are some of the countries to which students who are deaf or hard of hearing have already journeyed as part of study abroad programs. For each program, study abroad accommodations were handled differently by considering local interpreting resources, available technology, and the nature of the courses. Some examples of how institutions have implemented accommodations include:

- Sending a team of university interpreters to South Africa due to the technical nature of material and lack of local interpreting resources
- Sending one university interpreter and contracting with one local interpreter for a trip to Iceland
- Contracting with a team of local interpreters for providing on-site accommodations
- Sending a CART provider from the university's home area
- Providing the student with carbon paper so peers could take notes for the student during lectures

Recent trends suggest that employers value candidates who are strong in both traditional workplace values and intercultural values. As such, students with academic experiences beyond U.S. borders boast a repertoire of marketable skills unlike their stay-at-home peers. This type of experience can give the new college graduate an advantage in a very competitive hiring environment.

Much like their hearing peers, students who are deaf or hard of hearing who have engaged in study abroad programs experience enhanced communication abilities, self-confidence, problem-solving skills, and self-awareness.

### Resources

Mobility International USA –

<https://www.miusa.org/resource/tip-sheets/deafaccommodations/>

NACUA Notes: Federal Disability Laws: Do They Translate to Study Abroad Programs? Retrieved from <https://www.higheredcompliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ADAAAbroad.pdf>

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