

# **GENERAL ORIENTATION FOR UNBC STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MITACS**

## **GLOBALINK ABROAD**

### **Preparation**

Prepare yourself well for life abroad by finding out as much as you can about local customs, attitudes and behaviours. The worst thing to do is procrastinate, since this could result in not being able to get the necessary paperwork completed and confirm travel arrangements. Research the country of your destination by reading, viewing video's and films. During your stay abroad safety should always be your first priority. Without a safe environment and peace of mind you will not be able to succeed academically or professionally. People can experience a range of emotions when adapting to a foreign culture, from excitement and interest to frustration about different cultural norms, as well as depression and fear of the unknown. Things that may take minutes at home (i.e. telephone call, transportation, logistics, etc.) may take longer in other settings. Avoid being judgmental; instead, understand why the processes may be different. Always be respectful and patient.

It is important that you orientate yourself once you arrive in your host country. When travelling between your home, place of work or exploring your new environment always try to use public forms of transportation and whilst exploring alone is not recommended, take the minimum precaution of letting friends and family know where you are going and your expected time of return. Pay attention to your surroundings and particularly your drinks when being entertained. Always carry photo identification with you and program local emergency services numbers into your cellular device if you have one or keep those numbers with you.

Learn about the potential hazards that may be associated with a particular country or region such as landmines, disease, violence, political instability, terrorism, environmental disasters such as earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, landslides or Tsunami or corruption. Ensure you register with the Canadian Embassy or Consulate.

### **Packing**

The most common problem people have when going abroad is trying to pack too much. If you cannot carry the luggage around at home then you won't be able to handle it when trying to negotiate travel on and off the plane, trains or buses. If you can't bear to lose something, then leave it at home. Before you leave for the airport make sure you check the airline's baggage limits and allowances as they changed for most carriers in 2015. Do not try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container. Keep all medications in the original container to avoid problems.

# **GENERAL ORIENTATION FOR UNBC STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MITACS**

## **GLOBALINK ABROAD**

### **Health**

It is important that you ensure you have health insurance coverage during your stay abroad. Health Insurance BC will only cover the amount of equivalent care costs in BC, which in many countries will be insufficient. You must inform Health Insurance BC of your planned absence from BC to ensure that your coverage will be effective overseas. In case of illness, or for ongoing care, it is a good idea to have copies of your medical records with you

Some countries require a medical examination certificate before they will issue a visa. If this is the case in your country of destination, call for an appointment with your doctor. A full medical examination can usually be done and processed within two weeks. These exams may not be covered under your Health Insurance BC and subject to a fee.

### **Driving and Roads**

If you plan to drive while away, it may be important to apply for an International Driver's License. Depending upon the length of your residence abroad, some countries require you to have a local or International Driver's License. The latter are available at BCAA.

<http://www.bcaa.com/support/support/trip-planning/international-drivers-permit/obtain-ipd>

Depending on your country of travel traffic patterns may be similar to what you are familiar with or totally alien. During your first weeks please exercise extreme caution until you become accustomed to the traffic patterns and drivers behaviours. Deteriorating roads, hairpin curves with no guardrails, inadequate signs and lighting, disregard for traffic laws, and poorly maintained vehicles are commonplace in many countries where you may travel.

### **Gender Safety Issues**

Whether you are a woman or a man, you should be aware of cultural restrictions and expectations concerning dress and behaviour. These can be very different from those in Canada and will affect how you or your peers will be treated, what will be expected of you and what you are allowed to do.

The casual male-female interactions and freedom of movement and dress common here may embarrass or offend people in other cultures. Seemingly inappropriate actions can jeopardize your safety. Check local customs and abide by them carefully. In some countries extended eye contact can be misinterpreted as flirtatious or intimidating.

### **Culture Shock**

It is common for people to suffer from some form of culture shock when they are transplanted into a foreign setting. This is a normal reaction to a new environment where you are no longer

## GENERAL ORIENTATION FOR UNBC STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MITACS

### GLOBALINK ABROAD

'in control' as you have been at home. People can experience a range of emotions when adapting to a foreign culture, from excitement and interest to frustration, depression and fear of the unknown. People do things differently. No one speaks English. There's nothing on TV. Things that take minutes at home (shopping, making a photocopy, a telephone call) may take hours or even days away from home. Try to avoid being judgmental; instead examine the causes of these differences. It is important to maintain a sense of humour and to be patient.

In adapting to a new culture, expect to go through three distinct stages. The progress through these stages varies for each individual, and is often a function of the length of time spent away from home. Cultural shock is normal. Recognizing it is the most important step in preparing yourself for it.

**1. "The Honeymoon Phase":** The first few days or weeks in a new culture are exciting, new and exotic, a sensory delight. Tourists who go overseas for two weeks may not leave the honeymoon phase. People about to spend years overseas may have very long honeymoon periods. But, soon enough, this blissful feeling wears off.

**2. "Culture Shock":** Cultural shock is the emotional and/or physical upset we experience settling into a new culture. For some, culture shock is brief and hardly noticeable. For others, it can cause intense discomfort often accompanied by hyper-irritability, bitterness, resentment, homesickness and depression. Some may experience physical symptoms such as upset stomach, fatigue, insomnia and headaches.

**3. "Cultural Adaptation":** Cultural adaptation involves psychological adjustment and social adjustment and refers to the success of adapting to a new culture by participating in the local culture, learning the language, making friends, and enjoying life. Accept the lesson that cultural adaptation teaches. One's culture, even the Canadian culture, does not pose the only way, right way, or best way of doing something. Reaching this state of cultural nirvana takes time. Do not rush it. Just be aware of the three stages. Observe and facilitate your progress throughout them. Keeping a journal is an excellent way to observe this.

**4. "Returning Home":** The last thing that people expect when they return home is a re-entry culture shock. Expect it. Your interests and values have changed, while those of your friends and family may not have. People will soon tire of hearing about your 'trip'. You may find that life in Prince George (at home) is boring. Everything is more interesting 'over there' (or cheaper, or tastier, or warmer, or better...). You will have been independent for some months, and you may now have to move back home and readjust to your previous culture. Once again, it is important to keep a sense of humour, to be patient and sensitive. This too shall pass!

# **GENERAL ORIENTATION FOR UNBC STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MITACS**

## **GLOBALINK ABROAD**

### **Power of Attorney**

Your financial dealings may be made easier if you arrange for a relative or friend (or someone you can trust) to have power of attorney (POA) while you are away. A POA can be arranged at your bank. This will allow your designate to take care of all your local banking while you are away.

A formal POA through a notary public or lawyer must be obtained in order for a designate to be able to deal with other issues such as student loans. It is recommended that you arrange to have both types of POAs. You must provide a copy of your formal POA to the International Education Office and the Financial Aids and Awards office.

### **Finances**

Try to have some money set aside at home for emergency use while you are abroad or for a cushion once you return to Canada. Leave this money with family or friends or in a separate bank account. Although you may not need to use it, it will help to give you some peace of mind. Check that your debit/credit cards will work in your destination country and ensure that you advise your banking institution of your trip. Understand the value of your host country's currency.

### **Behaviour, Conduct and Crime**

Depending on where you are going there may be cultural differences that are important for you to understand. Behaviour that is acceptable and appropriate here may be considered disrespectful, offensive and sometimes even criminal in other countries. Different countries place different values on a person's religion, sexual persuasion, political activism, public displays of affection, consumption of alcohol and drugs and even how you dress. Those beliefs and ideals when not adhered to by you may provide persons in the host country to form a negative stereotype as to what your behaviours could be interpreted as. E.g. it is a common held misconception by some nations that because a North American female dresses in clothing that reveals their arms, legs and midribs that they are open to sexual encounters.

Even though you may be working as an intern during this time you are still a UNBC student so are an ambassador representing your Program, UNBC, British Columbia and Canada. You must abide by the rules and regulations of both UNBC and your place of internship. If you are involved in illegal activity you will receive the same treatment as citizens of the country you are in; UNBC assumes no responsibility in such cases and the Canadian government can only ensure that you are not discriminated against.

## **GENERAL ORIENTATION FOR UNBC STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MITACS**

### **GLOBALINK ABROAD**

No matter what precautions you take to ensure your safety, as within Canada sometimes a situation occurs that is beyond your control. If you are the victim of a crime or involved in a serious incident it is important that you report it, both to your host representative and UNBC. You have your cards with the toll free International number for UNBC. 1-866-307-1699 Security are available to answer that telephone 24/7, they would take your name and contact number and a brief summary of the nature of your call. That would result in the Risk Manager being contacted who would call you back expediently. We would much rather receive a call from you and assist you with advice than have you worry and stress about a situation.

#### **Contact Information and Resources**

Register with Department of Foreign Affairs: [www.voyage.gc.ca/index-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/index-eng.asp)

Travel Health: [www.TravelHealth.gc.ca](http://www.TravelHealth.gc.ca)

Association for International Road Travel: [www.asirt.org](http://www.asirt.org)

Lost/Stolen Passports Consular list: [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)

24/7 UNBC Emergency Contact (toll free) 1-866-307-1699

24/7 UNBC Emergency Contact (outside line) 250-563-9803

UNBC Risk Manager [sarah.elliott@unbc.ca](mailto:sarah.elliott@unbc.ca)

Please ensure that you register your travel information documentation with Risk & Safety

An orientation specific to your destination country will then be provided prior to your departure.

# **GENERAL ORIENTATION FOR UNBC STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN MITACS**

## **GLOBALINK ABROAD**

### **PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST**

The following checklist should help you to make some of your pre-departure arrangements.

#### **1. Documents**

- Valid Passport.
- Appropriate Student/Work Visa.
- International Driver's Licence.
- Someone in Canada has copies of important legal and financial documents.
- Arrange for power of attorney.
- Other.

#### **2. Finances**

○ Power Of Attorney and contact information provided to Financial Aid office.  
Do you have sufficient funds for the following?

- Travel and airfare.
- Accommodation and meals.
- Personal Expenses.
- Books and Supplies.
- Miscellaneous.
- Have you arranged accommodation

#### **3. Transportation**

- Air ticket reservation.
- Airport reception.
- Bus or train connections.
- Taxi.
- Map of host city/instruction for arrival
- Contact name in host country.
- Register with the Department of Foreign Affairs

#### **5. Health**

- Dental check-up.
- Medical check-up.
- Immunizations and Prophylactics.
- Medical Insurance.
- Prescriptions and Eyewear.
- Copies of Medical Records.
- Other.