Preparing to Study Abroad

One of the more fascinating and perplexing issues for students abroad involves relationships and interactions between men and women. It is important to recognize how heavily cultural differences affect this dynamic of social exchange. Begin now by researching gender roles in the culture where you will be studying. What is the history of gender relations within that culture? How are American women perceived there? How might your gender influence people’s interactions with you? What disadvantages and privileges are associated with gender in the host culture? Speak with your UK Education Abroad advisor about these questions so that we can assist you in gathering the information you need.

Campus & Web Resources

Office for Institutional Diversity
311 Main Building
uky.edu/diversity
vpid@uky.edu

Women Travelers
wanderlustandlipstick.com
This site gives a diverse range of information for women on everything from safety to packing to tips on individual countries. There are many useful web links from this site.

First Step Info Sessions

Monday & Tuesday at 4pm
Wednesday & Thursday at 3pm
207 Bradley Hall

For more information contact the Education Abroad office.

Contents in this brochure have been adapted from Penn State publications by Anthony Ogden
The University of Kentucky has long demonstrated a commitment to diversity and equity that is deeply rooted in both our historic mission and our philosophy of higher education. The University strives to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. The broad range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds inherent in multicultural diversity create rich learning communities from which all students have the opportunity to benefit.

We are committed to offering education abroad experiences to all UK students and recognize that education abroad is not just a student focused experience but rather a holistic, intercultural one. You are likely to encounter a significant range of attitudes regarding gender issues while abroad. Understanding how these perceptions can influence your study abroad experience can go a long way toward better understanding yourself and the new culture in which you’ll be living.

Our challenge to you, whether you are male or female, is to address gender issues with an open mind and to examine the differing patterns of gender roles and expectations in the spirit of intercultural learning. Take the opportunity to understand the social & historical views regarding gender and the interactions between men & women. You can alleviate potential misunderstandings by learning in advance as much as you can about the culture where you’ll be living. Please discuss your questions & concerns about this and any other issues with your Education Abroad advisor.

BRINGING THE EXPERIENCE HOME

Preparing for your return home is as important as preparing for your departure. Give thought to what you have gained from this experience. What have you learned while abroad and how will you use the experience later on? Did study abroad allow you to pursue new research or have an internship? Compare your pre-departure goals. Are you interested in sharing your experience with others? Before you return to the US it is helpful to consider how changes in your self identity may affect your relationship with family and friends back home.

While Living & Studying Abroad

Common American perceptions of appropriate male/female interaction may not correspond with the established patterns in other countries. This will become clearer to you as you begin making new friends and integrating into daily life abroad. Studying abroad allows you the opportunity to explore culturally-specific patterns of gender roles. Observe how gender interaction can provide deeper insight into the cultural values of the host country. Learn what the expected dress codes are for women and the consequences of not following these codes. Are there particular locations or activities in your host country that are considered unsafe for women? What are the social norms for romantic relationships? How is sexual harassment defined & responded to in the host culture? Are there added safety precautions you must follow based on your gender?