CSU Education Abroad COVID-19 FAQs

Updated: 8/26/20

An education abroad remains as important as ever. At this time, CSU Education Abroad (EA) is allowing students to apply for programs that begin in 2021. However, due to the significant and lasting effects of COVID-19 on our global community, it is important that potential education abroad students assess their risk tolerance with planning travel in these uncertain times; make backup plans in case their studies cannot move forward as planned; and if approved, set realistic goals about what the experience will look like. Your well-being is important to CSU. While we want you to have an education abroad experience, we need to remain flexible in this evolving situation.

When can I study abroad?

- CSU-EA is accepting education abroad applications for programs for all terms that begin in 2021.
- If possible, spring 2021 study abroad will probably be complicated, but CSU is hopeful that more mobility will return by summer 2021.
- The CSU International Travel Oversight Committee (ITOC) has specific guidelines to assess when it is possible and relatively safer to go abroad, as well as when a program may need to be cancelled. These are briefly outlined on the CSU International Programs website.
- CSU plans to make decisions about whether to authorize programs approximately two to four months prior to their start dates. Students who have an application in MyEdAbroad can anticipate ongoing communication from the Education Abroad team.
- Know that CSU’s authorization to attend some programs may need to change as the departure dates approach. However, the pandemic is dynamic and changes to infection rates and other health or safety concerns may necessitate a decision near departure dates or a recall home after a student departs.

What financial considerations should I be aware of and plan for?

As noted above, CSU and our partners plan to make firm decisions about authorizing programs abroad approximately two to four months prior to departure. As information is continually evolving, we recommend all students make a financial plan to protect some of their resources in case plans need to change later.

- We recommend that you postpone your financial commitments as long as your program will allow. Inform yourself about the withdrawal timelines and financial commitments for your program.
- “Affiliate Programs” or “Unaffiliated/direct enrollment programs” bill students directly for fees. Speak to your host organizations about this process and billing timeline. Most programs abroad are giving students more flexibility on commitment timelines during this uncertain time.
- “CSU Programs” (e.g. exchange or CSU faculty-led program) are billed directly by CSU. If CSU or our partners need to cancel these programs before departure, CSU will refund deposits and not bill for future expenses
- CSU charges an Education Abroad Fee to all Education Abroad participants. Students, who do not go abroad prior to the billing timelines (at the start of each CSU term), will not be charged this fee.
• Wait to purchase airfare or only purchase airfare that has minimal cancellation or change fees. Several airlines are offering more flexible tickets right now to make flight changes easier.
• Education abroad students are required to have international health insurance. However, many plans have pandemic exclusions. Travel insurance is not required but is recommended. Be sure to read the fine print so that you understand any limitations to these plans.

What if I go abroad and CSU asks me to return or my program is canceled early?

• Asking students to return home early or to cancel a program are difficult decisions, but one made with your best interests in mind. Spring 2020 demonstrated that many people were not able to leave a country for weeks or months due to travel restrictions, if they did not act within a few days of CSU’s or their program’s guidance to leave immediately.
• Many organizations will work to refund any recoverable costs. However, refunds from these organizations will likely be limited, if at all available. Be sure to understand all refund processes, as applicable.
• The CSU Education Abroad Fee is non-refundable once billed.
• Ensure that your program guarantees academic continuity in the form of online or remote classes in case of on-site cancellation. Note that if you can earn those credits, even if the teaching environment looks much different than you anticipated, those tuition fees will not be refunded.
• Budget for the additional costs of a last-minute flight, housing (e.g. any non-recoverable costs from housing abroad, hotel costs as you make your way home, etc.) and associated costs back home if you must return early. CSU is unable to reimburse students for these fees.

What might education abroad look like at this time?

• The pandemic continues to evolve steadily and there is much that we cannot predict. One certainty is that in the coming year, any international experience will look quite different than in the past. We also anticipate ongoing restrictions, such as no weekend trips to neighboring countries or restricted cultural activities. You might not get to see all the places you had originally planned. However, staying close to your home university and city offers a unique – and valuable – opportunity to immerse yourself in your host city and country.
• Remember: we each have an important role in reducing the spread of the virus. If you can travel abroad, you will need to do so in a responsible way to reduce exposure for both yourself and others. It is important to assess your interest in a more limited experience as well as your own risk tolerance with planning during this period of uncertainty.

What can I do now to plan for a future Education Abroad?

At this point in time, many spring 2021 programs are still being offered, but some are already being canceled due to travel restrictions and the growing cases of COVID-19 around the world.

• Consult with an academic advisor now so that you can map alternate plans that fit an education abroad later into your graduation plan, if upcoming travel is not possible.
• If you hope to take specific courses to be able to graduate on time while abroad, please make a back-up course plan in case programs need to be canceled later. This includes registering for CSU coursework for the term you hope to be abroad.
• Check to see if your passport is valid at least 6+ months beyond return date. Due to the pandemic, processing passport applications is severely delayed. If your passport is expiring before 2022, start the application for a passport renewal as soon as possible.

**My loved ones are nervous about me going abroad right now. What should I tell them?**

The decision to go abroad extends beyond CSU’s decision making. In this uncertain year, here are some things to consider and discuss with others:

• Consider how certain pre-existing conditions present a higher risk and may impact your personal health while abroad. This is also applicable to the friends and family you may live with when you return.

• CSU is here to help in navigating these uncertain times. In addition to your program coordinator, we have an international risk manager, who is available for consultation. Please reach out to your coordinator or educationabroad@colostate.edu with any questions or concerns, including those from your emergency contacts.

• Keep an eye on the most recent developments in your country(s) of interest. Some helpful resources include:
  - The Department of State
  - The Centers of Disease Control & Prevention
  - International Air Transport Association
  - The US Embassy in your host country