



S F S THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Student Field Preparation Guide

Summer Programs 2017

The School for Field Studies (SFS)

**PLEASE READ THIS MATERIAL CAREFULLY BEFORE LEAVING
FOR THE PROGRAM. BRING IT WITH YOU TO THE FIELD AS IT
CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.**

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www.fieldstudies.org

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Dear Conservationist, Biologist, or Environmentalist,

G'day and welcome to the SFS Centre for Rainforest Studies. During your time with us, you will explore and learn about the fascinating and fragile rainforest ecosystem and associated communities – human and otherwise. However, your role will be more than that of passive learner and your work at SFS will contribute directly to the long-term sustainability of tropical and temperate rainforest. You are an important part of a team that builds on project work conducted by previous SFS participants. You will learn new facts and develop skills as field biologists, while also playing a small but significant role in protecting and restoring one of the world's most important habitats.

We are looking forward to sharing many memorable experiences learning about and exploring a region that contains a high proportion of Australia's and New Zealand's biodiversity. What you get out of the course will depend largely on you as an individual and how much you involve yourself in the experience. You have the opportunity of a unique learning experience in one of the world's most biologically rich environments.

In New Zealand, you will travel to various sites north of Auckland, visiting temperate rainforest. In Australia, you will stay at our home base, the SFS Center for Rainforest Studies, which is idyllically situated in the heart of the rainforest, about 20 minutes from the nearest town. The site has a rich flora and fauna community and the living laboratory is right outside your classroom door!

We look forward to meeting you and sharing in your investigation of the rainforest.

Cheers,

Australia Centre Faculty and Staff

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Introduction

This Student Field Preparation Guide is an important tool which includes things you need to know to prepare for your international education experience! Use it from the time you are accepted to the program, to when you are getting ready to leave, to while you are in the field and even after you return home.

We begin with a reminder list of the vital tasks you need to accomplish, including what you need to send to SFS and when. There is information about plane tickets, travel documents and insurance, and some helpful safety tips. You will also find information about the particular country and Centre where you will be studying. Along with some background on these places, we have included a packing list and some suggestions concerning finances to help guide you in planning what to bring with you. There is also information about what life is like at your Centre on a day-to-day basis and what to expect as far as living conditions. Finally, we have included some resources on safety and traveling abroad.

Please be sure to read through the entire Guide and don't hesitate to contact your Admissions Counselor with any questions.

Terms and Regulations Contract: Note that as a condition for participation in an SFS program, you are required to document that you have read, understood and accepted all academic, safety, administrative and operational policies, rules and requirements by reading and signing the SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.

Preparing for Departure

Preparation Checklist

Please see the Accepted Students page (www.fieldstudies.org/admissions/accepted) and the Medical Approval Process (www.fieldstudies.org/safety/medical) page of the SFS website to find instructions, links to the infosnap login page, and PDF versions of these forms. All required forms should be sent to SFS (**or completed online through your SFS infosnap account when possible**):

The School for Field Studies
100 Cummings Center, Suite 534-G
Beverly, MA 01915

Email: admissions@fieldstudies.org / safety@fieldstudies.org

Fax: 978.922.3835 (general) / 978.232.1254 (safety)

Read this Guide carefully in its entirety, including sections on Program Overview, SFS Policies, and Traveling and Living Abroad.

To be submitted within 10 business days of acceptance:

- **Nonrefundable Program Commitment Deposit of \$250.** Students are not considered enrolled and financial aid applications will not be reviewed until this deposit payment is received.

To be submitted by the deadline that applies to your session:

SFS Summer I or Combined: April 15th
SFS Summer II: May 15th

- **SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at www.fieldstudies.org.

- **Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at www.fieldstudies.org.
- **FERPA Notice and Consent.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at www.fieldstudies.org.
- **Passport number and expiration date.** This must be entered electronically through your online infosnap account at www.fieldstudies.org. **Passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the last day of the program**
- **SFS Medical Forms:**
 - **SFS Online Medical Review Form.** Self-disclosure form that you complete online. Through your My SFS account.
 - **SFS Physical Examination & Authorization Form.** To be completed by a physician and submitted to the SFS Safety Department via fax, scan and email, or regular mail.
 - **Psychotropic Medication Form** and/or **Counseling Questionnaire**, if applicable, to be completed by your prescribing physician and/or counselor, therapist, psychiatrist, or psychologist and submitted to the SFS Safety Department via fax, scan and email, or regular mail.

Please note: No student may enter the field until Final Medical Approval is granted by SFS personnel.

This includes receipt and review of the SFS Online Medical Review Form and Physical Exam and Authorization Form. The Counseling Questionnaire, Psychotropic Medication Form, and supplemental documentation from a medical specialist may also be necessary. Inaccurate or incomplete information on any of the SFS medical forms may be grounds for rescinding an offer of admission, recalling a student from the program, or restricting student participation in certain activities. In addition, students are responsible for informing SFS of any changes to their health status that occur after submission of SFS medical forms.

- **Final tuition payment.** Due based on the timeline below. Invoices will be sent 30 days prior to the deadline listed below.

SFS Summer I or Combined: April 1st

SFS Summer II: April 30th

Other Preparation To Dos

- **Contact SFS alumni** on campus or as provided by SFS to learn more about what to expect.
- Obtain **passport**/Check to make sure your passport is valid.
- Obtain **visa** for entry into country if necessary. See Passport and Visa section of this Field Guide for more information.
- Make sure your bank/credit card companies know you will be **using your cards abroad**.
- If you are a permanent resident of the U.S. or an international student returning to school in the U.S after the program, please be sure to have the **necessary documentation for re-entry** into the United States.
- **Obtain required clothing and equipment** (see packing list later in this document).
- **Make travel arrangements** according to the travel instructions for your program. *(If you have any questions, please contact your admissions counselor).*
- **Schedule a consultation** with a travel doctor or your physician at least 60 days prior to departing for the program. Be sure to review:
 - Your **vaccination history** and requirements for every region in which you plan to travel.
 - **Prescription and over-the-counter medications.** Prescription medications should be in their original, labeled containers. Work with your physician and insurance to ensure you have enough prescription medication to last the full duration of the program, as it is rare you will be able to find the medicine you need in-country.

- Review and **understand what the specific risks** are for each region and country you will be visiting during the program and any pre- or post-program travel.
- The **Program Information for Participants and Medical Professionals**, listed on your Physical Exam and Authorization Form. Consider your level of fitness as well as any medical or physical accommodations that may be needed.
- Make sure you have **comprehensive international health insurance** (*required*). Documentation of your insurance is necessary on the SFS Medical Review Form. Check with your provider to make certain that your policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the country or countries where you are going.
- **Configure your laptop** to access your home school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field (see *Computers and Internet* section for further details).
- **Take care of any obligations or arrangements** you might have at your home institution for the semester following your time abroad. This includes student housing, course registration, campus employment, etc. Opportunities to do this while on program may be limited.
- **Make two clear copies of your flight itinerary and your passport.** Take one copy of each with you and leave one copy with a friend or family member and save copies in your email inbox.

Optional

- Obtain personal property insurance (e.g. for your laptop computer) if you so desire; SFS does not provide this.
- Purchase travel/course cancellation insurance if you wish. You may want to check with your home university if you are unable to locate a provider on your own. This is different from evacuation and repatriation insurance, which is provided by SFS.

Travel Arrangements

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements and for paying your travel to and from the program. Please refer to the Travel Instructions for your program. Any questions should be directed to your Admissions Counselor.

Advantage Travel and Suggested flights

You are not required to book all of your travel with our partner travel agency, Advantage Travel, nor is it guaranteed to be the cheapest flight available.

However, there are a number of benefits to booking with Advantage Travel, including:

- ✓ Your itinerary is guaranteed to meet the group pickup/drop off program schedule.
- ✓ Advantage Travel has some influence with airlines to make ticket adjustments in the event of last-minute program date changes or cancellation, lost tickets, or other unforeseen circumstances.
- ✓ This travel agent is familiar with SFS programs.
- ✓ This will be one-stop shopping for your travel plans, both to and from the program and for other trips if you plan to travel during a break or pre/post-program.
- ✓ Advantage Travel can place you on flights with other SFS students from your program when possible!

Making Your Travel Arrangements

Students will be sent detailed instructions for booking travel after acceptance to their SFS program. Please follow these instructions carefully and reach out to your Admissions Counselor with questions.

Field Staff will meet the group at the airport at the designated pick up time and coordinate transportation to the Center. If you experience travel delays, the center will coordinate with you to arrange an alternate pick up schedule.

Regardless of whether the ticket is purchased through Advantage Travel or another agent, SFS is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power or communications. Therefore, The School routinely does not authorize its designated agent to issue tickets until 30 days prior to the start of a program.

If you opt to travel before or after your program, be sure to check with immigration officials regarding your visa status.

Be sure to join a frequent flyer program! Also, check with your agent about multiple stops or stopovers; long trips are an excellent opportunity to see other countries or regions for a small fee or at no extra cost, but this usually needs to be arranged at the time of ticket purchase.

In an effort to make your semester with The School for Field Studies more sustainable, we ask you to consider a carbon offset for your flights to and from Australia and New Zealand.

Passport and Visa

You must have a passport to enter all of the countries where our programs take place. Make certain that your passport is valid until six months after the program ends and renew it as soon as possible, if necessary.

Australia summer program participants will need an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) in place of a visa. This can be processed by your travel agent (or Advantage Travel) or by you online through the Australian immigration website.

You can expect to receive detailed information on the visa process from your Admissions Counselor. **Do not apply for a visa before receiving this information!**

Arrival at the Airport in Australia

If your bags are delayed in travel, you should complete a lost baggage form at the airline desk after clearing Customs.

Ask to have bags routed to:

SFS Center for Rainforest Studies
RN 2710 Gillies Highway
Yungaburra, Queensland 4884
AUSTRALIA

It is not unusual for bags to get delayed in transit; they usually show up within two days. **Be sure to have the Center address written on all luggage tags as well as taped inside your luggage.**

About SFS Australia and New Zealand

New Zealand and Australia

New Zealand is an island country with two main landmasses: the North Island and the South Island. In New Zealand, you will be spending all of your time on the North Island. If you “Google” the North Island of New Zealand, then most everything North of Auckland is where you are going to be until you leave for Australia. You will be staying at a variety of different sites that accommodate student groups.

New Zealand is geographically isolated at 1250 miles (2000 km) southeast of Australia and hundreds of miles south of New Caledonia, Fiji, and Tonga. It was once part of Gondwana, the super continent, but separated from other land masses about 80 million years ago. This geographic isolation over a long period of time has resulted in the evolution of flora and fauna, especially birds, which are unique and often endemic to New Zealand. The main forest types are podocarp and kauri forests (and southern beech in the cooler climates). After the arrival of humans, the introduction of non-native mammals, and severe deforestation, many of these endemic species became endangered or extinct.

New Zealand’s extinctions include the moa, Haast’s eagle (once the world’s largest bird of prey), huia, laughing owl, and flightless wrens. Hunting pressure in combination with deforestation and the introduction of predators caused the extinction of these animals. In addition, five species of vascular plants are believed to be extinct, including Adam’s mistletoe and a species of forget-me-not. Although New Zealand has suffered high rates of extinctions, it is now a world leader in island restoration projects, in which invasive species are eradicated and native species reintroduced. Several offshore islands now serve as wildlife reserves that protect endangered species. Recently New Zealand has also been developing mainland ecological islands for the protection of native species.

New Zealand was originally settled by Eastern Polynesians between 700 and 2000 years before present. These people developed a distinct culture known as Maori that dominated the region until the arrival of the first Europeans in 1642. As a result of European settlement, mainly by the British, much of New Zealand culture is British in origin. Maori traditions and culture always maintained a presence on the islands, but there has been a recent resurgence in Maori language, art, and culture. The marae (sacred place used for social and religious purposes) and the extended family still play roles in communal and family life of Maori people.

New Zealand lies at approximately 34 to 47 degrees south, roughly the same as Italy in the Northern Hemisphere. Unlike Italy, New Zealand’s climate is free from continental influences and exposed to cold southerly winds and ocean currents. Thus, the climate is mild and temperate with temperatures rarely falling below 32 F (0 C) or rising above 86 F (30 C). Auckland receives the most rain of any New Zealand city at about 50 in (1280 mm) per year.

We have chosen to compare the rainforests of New Zealand’s North Island to the rainforests of Queensland, Australia, because these two countries share similar Gondwanan ancestry, but have experienced different patterns of indigenous and European settlement and differ in their economic development. You will see many similarities and differences in the ecological, geographical, social, economic, and historical factors that have shaped natural resource management in these countries.

Australia was chosen as the site for SFS’s rainforest study program for a variety of reasons. The rainforests of the region have been subjected to all of the abuses that rainforests the world over are now experiencing, only for a longer period of time. However, many of Australia’s rainforests are now protected, some are being experimented upon to develop sustainable use strategies, some former rainforest lands are being reforested, and others are retained for agriculture or as pasture. Local governments, resource managers and communities are struggling simultaneously to deal with this shifting mosaic of ecology and economics. In short, Australia is where many of the world’s tropical countries will be in 20-30 years, and solutions to Australia’s rainforest management and conservation problems may serve as a model for the rest of the world.

The tropical rainforests of Australia cover less than .01% of the country. These forests are found in a narrow, broken belt between Townsville and Cooktown, along the northeast coast of the state of Queensland. The forests are bordered to the east by the Coral Sea and to the west by a "sea" of dry grasslands and eucalypt savannas. Annual rainfall, a key determinant of rainforests, exceeds 5 feet (1.5 meters) per year; yet, within 43.5 miles (70 kilometers) the precipitation may average less than a third of that figure. The shape and size of these islands of rainforest have been greatly influenced by agriculture, ranching, and other forms of human activity. As you enter a Queensland rainforest, the multi-tier nature of the forest architecture becomes apparent. The uppermost level is composed of a few emergent trees that penetrate the upper canopy level. The canopy itself is so dense that the forest floor remains relatively dark, cool, and moist even during periods without rain. The few herbaceous plants that grow on the forest floor have adapted to make the most of every photon of light. The limbs and trunks of many trees support epiphytic plants such as orchids, vines, ferns, and strangler figs.

Australia's rainforests are famous for having the world's most diverse assemblage of primitive plant species. Many of these are relic species which have changed little since Australia was connected with South America, Antarctica, India, and Africa in the vast super-continent Gondwanaland. Ancient tree ferns and towering kauri pines flourish amongst more recently evolved rainforest species.

The animal life is just as remarkable and unique. Many rare and endemic marsupial species occur in local rainforest fragments. Pademelons, bandicoots, musky rat-kangaroos, and a range of possums are frequently seen around the Centre's buildings. Tree kangaroos and tiny sugar-gliders may well be seen during an evening of spotlighting in nearby rainforest. At dawn and dusk, platypus can be found playing and feeding in local creeks, and many reptiles like the large 15-foot amethystine python may be encountered on warm days and nights.

Queensland rainforests are a birder's paradise. Brush turkeys, birds that incubate their eggs in enormous mounds of decaying vegetation, are seen daily. King parrots, sulfur-crested cockatoos, rainbow lorikeets, and a host of other splendidly colored birds are common.

In July 1988, SFS purchased a tract of 153 acres in northern Queensland to permanently establish the campus of the Centre for Rainforest Studies (CRS). The Centre property includes approximately 100 acres of (previously) selectively logged primary rainforest, 20 acres of pasture and orchard, and 30 acres of re-growth forest. Several thousand acres of state forest, which have received designation as a World Heritage site, border the property on one side. The rolling terrain of the Centre's property ranges in elevation from about 2296 to 2624 feet (700 to 800 meters) above sea level. Local temperatures range from 40°F to 85°F, and average annual rainfall at the Centre is about 60 inches (most of it falling from November-April).

As is typical of tropical rainforests, species diversity is remarkably high. One 33ft.2 (10m2) plot on the property yielded 86 species of trees and shrubs. Vertebrates on the property include marsupials such as the musky rat-kangaroo, red-legged pademelons, bandicoots, and striped possums. There are spectacled flying foxes (fruit bats), reptiles which include at least ten species of snakes, leaf-tailed geckos, forest dragons and lace monitors, several species of rainforest frogs, innumerable species of birds including the king parrot, and butterflies including the Cairns birdwing and Ulysses.

The SFS Centre for Rainforest Studies is secluded. The nearest town is Yungaburra (population 1000), a 20-minute drive by car. This small town offers hotel and restaurant facilities, a post office, and a supermarket.

Cairns (pop. approx. 130,000) is 70 minutes from the Centre by car. It is a major tourist destination and hosts an international airport, auto rental facilities, and a large resort community serving visitors to the nearby Great Barrier Reef. It is also home to James Cook University, the largest regional teaching and research institution that boasts a strong tropical studies program. The town of Atherton (pop. 8,000) is a 30-minute drive from the Centre. This regional centre for the Tablelands carries most supplies and is the home to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization's (CSIRO) Tropical Forest Research Centre. The Tropical Forest Research Centre contains a library, herbarium, and a staff of a dozen or more scientists.

Weather and Climate

New Zealand's summer is from December to February, autumn or fall is from March to May, winter is from June to August, and spring is from September to November.

Since students will be in New Zealand during the winter, the average temperature is 59 degrees F. During this time of year, it rains often and there is not much sunshine! Rain gear is essential; you can find details on the packing list page. You will be on the North Island, so the weather will be milder than other parts of New Zealand, but be prepared for cold! Cold nights with frost, pleasant days, and occasional prolonged wet weather are all to be expected during June, July, and August. Everyone should be prepared for the sun/sunburn by bringing hats and sunscreen. Due to decreased ozone over New Zealand, sun exposure is a problem even in winter.

The Atherton Tablelands, Australia, at 17 degrees south latitude (comparable to Managua, Nicaragua), has two major seasons: a "wet" season, lasting from approximately November through March (the Australian summer), and a "dry" season from April to October (Australian winter and spring). During the Australian winter it can be cold in the mornings and the evenings; please review packing list. The "wet" season is wet and hot and is usually characterized by heavy rains and many cloudy days. The wet season is also characterized by thunderstorms, monsoons, and cyclones, especially from January through March; therefore, bad road conditions often hamper mobility during this season. The "dry" season weather is often cool and can also include rain. Expect to wear a fleece and long pants, and be prepared with wet weather gear if necessary. Daytime temperatures can get down to 50°F (10°C), with frost on the ground some nights.

Program Overview

The Centre for Rainforest Studies' academic and research program emphasizes tropical rainforest restoration and management. Rainforest ecosystems are hot spots of floral and faunal biodiversity. Large areas of Queensland and New Zealand's North Island were once covered with rainforests. However, agricultural and residential development have destroyed and disrupted rainforest habitats and species.

Session I compares and contrasts the ecological, geographical, social, economic, and historical factors that have shaped natural resource management in Far North Queensland and northern New Zealand. Both countries share a similar Gondwanan ancestry; however, indigenous and European settlement patterns and economic development significantly differ between the two countries.

Session II works only in Australia, focusing on the techniques used in rainforest research.

Facilities

The facilities in New Zealand will vary. Students will stay in several different locations throughout the two weeks. The facilities will be relatively the same as the ones at the Centre in Australia. At all of the places there will be basic cabin accommodations, shared bunks/bathrooms, etc. and depending on the site, a kitchen, dining area, classroom, and common space for socializing. In New Zealand, laundry can only be done at the first location, and then when students return to Auckland before flying to Australia. There is minimal access to dryers. Students should pack well so that clothing can last the duration of our time in New Zealand.

The SFS Center for Rainforest Studies site is called Warrawee, which means "you are welcome here" in the local aboriginal dialect. The Center is located in the foothills (elevation of 2624 feet, or 800 meters) of the Gillies Mountain range on the eastern edge of the Atherton Tablelands. Surrounded by forest are four seven-person student cabins (22' x 22' each), which house up to 28 students. Each student will be provided with a set of drawers for storing items in the cabin in addition to the storage cubbies at the main building. Some faculty members live in on-site cabins and a few live off site. The cabins are a short walking distance away from the male and female restroom blocks with shower and toilet facilities. The SAMs and interns all live on site as well.

The Center's main building (a 5-10 minute walk from cabins on beautiful forest trails) includes:

- A lecture classroom with desks

- A library with books, reprints and student Directed Research papers
- A computer room with four laptops for student research use
- Offices for Center staff
- Kitchen and outdoor dining facilities
- Both indoor and outdoor Common space for socializing. The indoor Common Room has couches and blankets, a TV for watching movies, a library, and lots of games. Feel free to bring books or movies that you are happy to leave behind for future students, but if you don't, there is plenty to read here during free time.
- Some weight-lifting and other gym equipment and a volleyball court
- Laundry facilities: two washers (the Center provides laundry soap) and two dryers. Use of the dryers is very much discouraged as they use a lot of energy. There are plenty of clotheslines to hang-dry your clothing, as long as the weather permits it!

The "Study Shack", is a 5 minute walk from cabins and a 7 minute walk from the main building.

Research Equipment

The Centre maintains an inventory of dissecting microscopes and a variety of sampling and measuring equipment appropriate for use in the field and the classroom. The Centre has a small laboratory, but most research is done in the field.

Library and Computers

In New Zealand: There is no on-site library, computer, or internet access in the accommodations; however, staff may bring some relevant texts that you can use for research. During free time in Auckland, you may have the opportunity to use internet.

In Australia: The Centre library consists of about 700 books, journals, and articles, several thousand reprints, and 100 or so novels. The focus of the academic collection is on topics relevant to the Centre and includes past students' Directed Research papers. You are encouraged to bring reading and research materials that can be left on site. This collection is NOT an exhaustive library of all resources necessary for your assignments and research, but a collection appropriate for a field station. Though SFS does its best to update its library accordingly, you should plan to rely on the databases and online library available to you through your home institution during your SFS program. SFS does not provide additional access to any e-library resources. Before arriving in-country for your SFS program, you should make arrangements with your home school to have remote access to your library's online journals, as you will use this very often during your program. **Make sure you know your remote library log-in and password, understand your home school's policy on accessing library materials remotely, and configure your laptop to access your school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field.**

We have four networked student laptop computers available, running Microsoft Windows 7 and Microsoft Office 2010 software. These computers are connected to a Centre wireless network (for academic use only). We have a separate wireless network for students to use on their personal computers. As internet in the rainforest is limited, we cannot support internet usage for large downloads such as movies, music, TV shows, Youtube, or Skype. Please do not expect to be downloading such items as this will crash the system. Even normal internet use like checking e-mail, searching for articles, or using websites for research and travel plans does not happen as quickly as you are used to. Do not expect to rely on the internet as much as you might at home- its functionality is at the mercy of both the weather and the number of people using it. Rainforest conditions can be harsh on computers and technological equipment. We do our best with the technology we provide but we cannot guarantee that all computers and the network will be working at all times, especially during times of high student use. Access controls on all student computers will prevent additional software installations and settings changes.

If you have your own laptop, you are highly encouraged to bring it to the Center. This can help alleviate some of the stress involved during critical assignment periods, when computer access is in high demand. As a general recommendation, this should be a PC or Mac compatible laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2003

or later software (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents. Files can be transferred between your personal laptop and the Center's computers for printing or other purposes, using your own USB flash drive. You will not be able to connect your laptop directly to the Center network or printers. You should also bring a portable surge suppressor, a laptop carrying case, and we recommend a security cable or lock to protect your laptop. In addition, **do not expect to maintain your data using google.docs or dropbox since access to internet is limited.** Instead of keeping your data in the cloud, plan to use a USB drive or similar external data storage devices.

Please be aware that the heat and humidity can be very hard on laptop computers and can cause failure! It is good to understand that electronic repair centers are better equipped to handle PC repairs. **Apple electronic products do not do well in high humidity and are much more difficult to repair or replace as there are very few authorized Apple repair centers and spare parts are very expensive.** Students have had success with storing their devices in a plastic Ziploc bag with rice or silica packets when not in use to help absorb the humidity, but this is not a fool-proof option. In short, keep in mind that electronic devices could be damaged by the climate.

With both new and old laptops, in order to be prepared for technical difficulties:

- Consider bringing a spare battery
- Consider bringing a spare charger
- Bring a laptop sleeve or waterproof case with moisture absorbing material and use it any time the computer is not in use!

With touchscreen computers and tablets:

- Order water proof and water resistant cases whenever available
- Keep stored in a protective sleeve whenever not in use

Data backups

- Back up your computer prior to entering the field and leave that backup at home!
- Plan to store your data on an external hard drive during the program in addition to the cloud!
- Internet is not always available, so do not plan to rely solely on the cloud for storage

Note that SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance. Students are encouraged to store their laptops in their lockers whenever they are not in use.

All assignments can be saved to your network storage folder, which will be backed up by the network at the end of each day. This folder can be burned onto a CDR or copied to a USB stick prior to departure from the program. You will be responsible for backing up and managing files saved on your personal laptop or in any other location outside of your network storage folder. **Be sure to take your project data with you upon completion of the program, as it will not be available from SFS later.**

Food

There is nothing foreign about Australian food to the American palate. There are abundant quantities of fresh meat, fish, dairy products, fruits and vegetables. All food at the Center is purchased locally, prepared by the Center and served buffet-style. The Center employs a cook for the evening meal, Monday through Friday; at other times food is prepared by staff and students. Everyone shares in cleaning and other mealtime chores. You can generally expect breakfasts of cereals, yoghurt, fruit, eggs that you may prepare yourself, and toast; lunches of sandwiches (peanut butter & jelly, cold meat, hummus), cheese, salads, and leftovers; and hot suppers of vegetarian and meat dishes.

Special Religious Requirements

If you have questions regarding a religious holiday which falls during program time, please contact your Admissions Counselor immediately upon acceptance. We will try to accommodate students' religious observances. However, schedules often involve complex coordination with many parties and reservations are often made months in advance. Any missed program time will necessarily need to be made up.

Cleaning

An essential part of life at a field station is everyone sharing responsibility for maintaining the facility and working together to keep things running smoothly. Groups of students and staff (KP – Kitchen Patrol) will rotate daily to clean and compost every day after each meal. Also, there is a once a week general cleaning of the Centre done by the students and the staff called Warrawork. This includes cleaning the Centre, common areas, classroom, toilets, vans, and classroom, to name a few tasks. Warrawork generally takes place on a Friday. Cleaning the site once a week is absolutely necessary to our health and hygiene and something that all staff and students take part in. In New Zealand, groups will be assigned to clean up our accommodation areas when we depart for the next location. Many hands make light work!

A Typical Day at the Center

Generally classroom lectures, if held, are before lunch; time after lunch will be in the field. Occasionally there are long classroom days or (more frequently) full days in the field. In reality, though, while there is no typical day at CRS, here is an idea of what you can expect.

6 days of class or field time a week, one day off each week

Sample Schedule

Sample Day 1 Lectures

Start Time	End Time	Description
0730	0830	Breakfast
0830	0930	L. NRM02 Australian and Tropical Forest Environments
0945	1045	L. NRM03 Australian Rainforest Classification
1100	1200	L. Economic theory and NRM impacts in Queensland
1200	1300	Announcements + Lunch
1300	1430	FL. NRM04 Rainforest Disturbance & Succession at Tolga Scrub
1430	1700	FL. NRM03 Rainforest structure and classification at Wongabel State Forest
1730	1830	Dinner
1900	1930	Selection of record sheet
1930	2100	Spotlighting

Sample Day 2 Community Service Day

Start Time	End Time	Description
0700	0800	Breakfast
0800	1200	Rotational groups: TREAT, Landcare, site maintenance,
1200	1300	lunch
1300	1430	Warrawork
1430	1700	Free time in Atherton or Yungaburra for errands, internet cafes, or sports
1730	1830	Dinner

Sample Day 3 Field Work

Start Time	End Time	Description
0730	0830	Breakfast
0830	1200	Field work or write-up and analysis
1200	1300	Announcements + Lunch
1300	1700	Field work or write-up and analysis
1730	1830	Dinner

Note: Some days, field work can start as early as 5:00am or last through the night, depending on the topic of research.

A Typical Week at the Centre

The weekly schedule at CRS will vary significantly from the beginning of the program to the end. The academic program is delivered over a six-day week. During the week you will find yourself following a rigorous schedule, however, one must be very flexible for changes occur all of the time! Due to the Center's relative isolation, and the cost of transportation, staff will facilitate some non-academic activities off site. Genuine "alone time" is lacking at the Centre, but the support and dynamic energy of the group is always abundant and there are 62 hectares in which to find solitude!

Throughout all programs, one day a week is reserved for studying, exploring the local area, and relaxing. While staff members are provided with periodic days off throughout the program period, at least one staff member is always on duty at the Centre.

In New Zealand you will have a free weekend in Auckland at the end of our time there. There may be the opportunity for a free afternoon in Auckland during the beginning of the program, as well.

Students and the Local Community

During your stay at the Centre for Rainforest Studies, you are a member of the wider Atherton Tablelands community. There are many occasions when you will be expected to interact with the local residents in both academic and informal situations. Please remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies from culture to culture and be sensitive to this when you are away from the Center or interacting with community members. The staff will brief you on this in more detail during Orientation.

You may have the opportunity to present the findings of your research to local residents, be they farmers, regional planners, or scientists. You will work closely with volunteers of local tree-planting organizations in all phases of reforestation including seed collection, germination, seedling care, and planting.

Numerous outings and social occasions will provide you with the opportunity to appreciate Australian culture.

Between-Program Break

Only the Summer Combined program includes a five-day break between programs, during which time you leave the program and travel on your own or in a group. The Centre is closed during this break and you are responsible for yourself during this time. Some students meet up with friends or family or choose to travel with other students or on their own.

Before the break, staff will brief you on current health and safety concerns as well as necessary precautions for traveling in the host country and/or surrounding countries. You are advised to travel in groups of two or more and will be given emergency contact numbers to carry with you during the break. Centre staff will also ask that you submit a rough itinerary, with phone numbers where possible, prior to the break.

Please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor with any concerns regarding the mid-program break.

Communications

Mail

You will not be able to receive mail in New Zealand. If you want to receive mail in Australia, make sure your friends and family know the Centre address and remind them that letters sent to Australia from the USA should be marked "AIRMAIL." The average one-way travel time for airmail to Australia from the USA is 10-14 days; 14-16 weeks for surface. Postage from Australia to the US costs about AU\$2.60 per letter. **Please tell family and friends not to send any mail during the last three weeks of the program; you will not receive mail if it arrives after you have left the program.**

Mail should be sent to:

**Student Name
SFS Center for Rainforest Studies
P.O. Box 141 Yungaburra
Queensland, 4884 Australia**

For summer programs, do not have any packages sent to you. They are unlikely to arrive in time and CRS will not return/forward mail or packages after the completion of a program.

Students who plan to travel after the program often try to lighten their baggage by sending gear home. Surface freight is the least expensive way to do this, generally costing \$60-\$100 per 40 lb. package and taking 10-14 weeks in transit. Parcel size is limited to items of less than 3 feet in length and 3 feet in circumference. Airmail is many times more expensive. You should expect about two weeks for delivery. Packing light alleviates the need to ship belongings home. Students are often happier traveling with lighter bags as well.

Telephone

There is no telephone access for students at our accommodations in New Zealand, but students will be able to use phone cards on pay phones while visiting town (perhaps once per week). Phone cards can easily be purchased after arrival in New Zealand.

The Center has a student telephone to which you will have access for outgoing calls. All outgoing calls must be made with a calling card. Pre-paid calling cards can be purchased upon arrival and offer reasonable rates of AUS 5-10 cents/minute (plus AUS 25 cent connection fee) and past students have found them to be the easiest and most reliable way to place a call. If you purchase a calling card in advance, verify that the card can be used for placing calls from Australia to the countries where you plan to be phoning. While 1-800 numbers work in the USA, they usually do not work in Australia so if a carrier provides a 1-800 number, make sure to ask for an alternative number that can be used. Again, the Center strongly encourages purchase of the pre-paid calling cards that are available in nearby towns as the rates are often better and past students have had mixed success using calling cards purchased prior to the start of the program.

Internet

There is no internet access at our accommodations in New Zealand. Students can expect to visit internet cafes about once per week in town.

In Australia, Internet access is available for students 24 hours a day at the Centre to support research and educational work. There is no guarantee of 100% uptime, but we do our best to maintain the connections. Often times, conditions outside of the control of SFS are the cause for internet outages, and will be resolved as quickly as possible. Remember, we are in the rainforest—not at an internet café! **The internet is NOT as fast as your home broadband connections and can be temperamental. Please be patient with it.**

Also, in Australia internet payment is per usage, not unlimited general access (as in the U.S.). As such, streaming and downloading video and music, uploading photos, and Skyping extremely costly for the Centre and are therefore not permitted.

In order to maintain the stability of the network, the following actions are prohibited:

- Downloading any non-research related files.
- Downloading large files, especially audio/video files.
- Downloading any software application
- Gaining unauthorized access to remote Internet systems or abusing Internet systems or Internet users.
- Taking actions that compromise the security of the center network.
- Representing The School for Field Studies in any manner.
- Distributing SFS-owned knowledge or propagating falsified information about SFS.
- Spamming, hacking, virus distribution, etc.
- Illegally copying or redistributing copyrighted material.
- Viewing pornographic or illegal content.

In the event of any violation of this policy, SFS reserves the right to suspend or terminate any or all Internet access.

News from the Field

Be sure to let your friends and family know to check SFS News from the Field (www.fieldstudies.org/blog) often! Updates will include photos, posts from the faculty on what students have been doing most recently, as well as entries from students with their thoughts about their experience. It's a great way for your loved ones to follow your exciting adventures!

What to Bring

SFS's packing list includes all items that are essential for this program. The list was compiled based on feedback from past students and current staff. **You should bring these items with you to the Center.** There is time to purchase items from a local town but it may be at least a week before you are able to get there, and shopping in Australia is expensive. Please note that selection and availability of merchandise are limited for some items. Make sure all equipment is in good shape before leaving: check for leaks, broken straps, jamming zippers, etc. In addition, **any equipment or shoes that have dried dirt on them need to be thoroughly washed off prior to packing** or you may be delayed when passing through quarantine in Australia.

SFS highly recommends packing in your carry-on bag: two changes of clothes, basic toiletries and essential medications, one warm garment, camera and any other essential items that would be needed to survive for three days after arrival; luggage is occasionally misplaced for that long. Although it is rare, luggage is occasionally lost permanently, so be sure to carry on all your valuables! Test-pack your belongings to make sure you meet baggage requirements. General baggage allowances include one checked item and one carry-on bag. Extra baggage usually costs \$90-\$150 (or more) per item. However, policies differ by airline and are prone to changes so please **check baggage limitations with your air carrier(s)**. Additionally, make sure that you can carry all of your belongings without assistance – and leave some space for souvenirs!

Electrical Appliances

There are electrical outlets in the student cabins. The electrical voltage in New Zealand and Australia is 240. Some electronics, including most computers, can handle 240 and simply need an adapter to go from an American plug to an Australian-shaped one, while others cannot and need to go through a voltage converter before connecting. These

converters can be found at most electronic stores. It is best to check on the back of each device for the line "INPUT: 100-240." If it does say 100-240 then you just need an adapter. If it says something like 100-110 then you will also need a converter. Adapters (for different-shaped plugs) are available for purchase in Australia, but you should bring a voltage converter with you from the U.S.

Required Items

The rainforest is hard on clothes and your belongings will get moldy. Many students bring old, sturdy, well-worn clothes to wear in the field and maybe leave behind at the end of the program. Do not bring clothes, gear, or valuables that you would not want damaged, especially during the wet season. Spring and summer students should be prepared for the possibility of extended cold and damp weather and should bring additional warm clothes. The temperatures can range from 40°F to 85°F with warm days and cool nights. There is no heat in any of the buildings, nights can be cold, and we dine outdoors year-round. Marsh flies (which have a nasty bite) are common around the centre throughout the year, and are particularly attracted to dark and blue clothing. Keep this in mind when packing.

**There is bug spray, sunscreen, and some pair of gumboots (rubber boots/Wellies) that have been left from previous programs; however, if students require a certain type or are traveling before or after the program they should bring their own.

Please keep in mind that this packing list does not have amounts suggested, so please pack according to your own needs. Remember that you are responsible for carrying your own luggage!

Required Clothing

- **Shorts:** Nice shorts are acceptable town wear. Runners may want to bring more
- Synthetic **quick dry athletic t shirts**
- **Pants:** Cotton/synthetic blends are best - they dry quickly, and a pair that is heavier too for field work. At least 2 pairs and at least one long pair for wearing around the center at night.
- **Long-sleeved shirts:** Light fabric for working in the field and in the sun, and heavier ones for warmth and protection
- **Tank tops**
- **Light sweaters or fleeces**
- **Warm wool sweater or fleece:** For long classroom days, you may like to wear comfortable clothing such as sweatpants and sweatshirts. Although the days are warm, nights can be chilly during both semesters, so bring adequate warm layers.
- **Waterproof Rain Jacket** (with a hood!)
- **Waterproof Rain Pants**
- **Nice clothes:** for town, social occasions, weekends in Cairns, or presenting research.
- **Jeans** (not recommended for January-July. They do not dry easily!)
- **Swimsuit**
- **Underwear and socks:** Enough to get you through more than one week. Including at least three pairs of wool (light wool) or synthetic (not cotton) hiking socks
- **Gumboots** (Wellies/rubber boots) optional (but necessary January-July!) the Centre has several pairs of gumboots that you can use, but if you have an especially large or small foot it is recommended you bring your own. If you want your own pair, lightweight, shin-high boots with good tread are best.
- **Sturdy Hiking Boots**, preferably waterproof (please break-in prior to arrival)

- **Sneakers/Running Shoes** – sturdy with good tread
- **Flip-flops or Crocs** are recommended for wearing around the Centre; shoes like Toms or Keens tend to get moldy and gross. Please note that these will only be acceptable footwear **during the day**. Snakes are present and active at night, so **you will be required to wear long pants and closed-toe shoes after dark while moving about the center**.
- **Hat** – for sun and rain protection. VERY IMPORTANT!
- **Wool or fleece hat** (April - August)
- **Sunglasses**
- Sturdy (e.g. leather) **work gloves** for weeding
- **“Regular” clothes** in addition to your field clothes. You will have the opportunity to go into town about once a week, and other activities such as Homestay Weekend, Cairns weekends, and mid-semester break will give you opportunities to wear your civvies.

Required Personal Items and Toiletries

- **Toiletries** (BIODEGRADABLE PLEASE!!). Items can be purchased from the nearest town on Fridays, but be sure you have enough for at least the first week.
- **Wristwatch** - preferably water-resistant
- **Personal First-Aid Kit** - with plenty of anti-itch creams, Neosporin, Bacitracin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, Band-Aids, tape, tweezers, anti-histamines, etc. You will find this to be useful. Staff at CRS cannot dispense any medications, even things as simple as anti-itch creams, so please bring your own.
- Any necessary **over-the-counter medications or prescriptions**. Per Australian law, CRS staff is **very** limited in their ability to dispense any medications including Advil, Tylenol, Pepto-Bismol, Tums, anti-itch creams, anti-bacterial ointments, etc. Note also that overseas prescriptions are not accepted in Australia. Be sure to bring a copy of your prescriptions with you, however, to prevent delays at customs. You should bring adequate supplies of prescription medications with you to last throughout the duration of the program, in addition to over-the-counter medications like Advil, Tylenol, Tums, anti-histamines, etc.
- **If you experience motion sickness:** The highway to the center is VERY windy, long, and can make people nauseous!! As well, you will find yourself in the SFS vans for long amounts of time and if you plan on going out to the Great Barrier Reef—**please bring some Dramamine!** (If going out on the reef you may be able to purchase sea sickness medication on the boat but they tend to be more expensive). There is some good over-the-counter medicine that you can purchase in pharmacies.

Required Items for the Cabin

- **One set of sheets and a pillow case** (Standard twin size). Sheets are not provided at the Center but a pillow is provided.
- **Sleeping bag**, synthetic fill (down is much harder to keep dry/mold-free), higher weight/lower temperature rated
- Reliable **alarm clock** of some kind
- **Towels** (1 big towel and 1 face towel) quick dry towels

Required Items for the Field and Classroom

- **Headlamp** with several packs of batteries. You will use your headlamp every evening to walk back to your cabin from the Center (5-10 minute walk). The trails between buildings are not lit and it is dark under the rainforest canopy! A flashlight may be brought as a backup, however we do night work where you will need to use both hands, making it difficult to hold a flashlight.
- **Spiral-bound Notebooks** (there is an option to reuse extra notebooks from past students at the centre), pens and pencils. Paper in Australia is a different size than paper in the U.S. so you should not bring folders. You can purchase folders in Australia during a trip to town.
- **Daypack** - small backpack suitable for taking gear into the field.

- A **small duffle or weekend bag** to bring on overnight field excursions, weekends in Cairns, and mid-semester break.
- **2 Compression ("Ace") bandages** - must be carried with you EVERYWHERE for snakebite treatment or sprains.
- **Two water bottles** -1 liter capacity each.
- **Flash Drives/ USB memory sticks and/or external hard drive.** At least 2 GB recommended. You will use these to move files between personal and center computers, to take your work and photos home with you at the end of the program, and/or to back up your computer.
- If you are bringing your own computer, make sure to bring along an adapter (and check your computer's VLT). It is **highly** recommended you bring waterproof cases for your electronics, along with silicone packets (or some water-absorbing equivalent) to create a dry microclimate for them.
- **Gardening/work gloves** – we have quite a few pairs of gloves left behind by previous students, but if you have very small or very large hands, please consider bringing your own pair with you!
- **Ziplock baggies** - for waterproof storage, especially January-July (gallon ones are best for size)
- **Tupperware/Rubbermaid container** - one for packing lunches

Optional Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items

- **Laptop computer.** Please see "Library and Computers" section of this guide. It is highly recommended that you back up the contents of your computer prior to arriving in Australia. Please confirm that your laptop can accept 240v power, and you will need a standard Australian 3-prong power adapter to connect to the Center's power outlets. **Note:** *SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance. Harsh weather can take a toll on all electronic equipment. A dry bag for such items is helpful. **Please bring a portable surge suppressor, carrying case, and security cable or lock to protect your laptop.***
- **Camera equipment:** digital or film (if you are using film please know that it is expensive to buy and difficult to obtain in Australia). The Center has storage space for student cameras and laptops but you should ensure that your equipment is adequately waterproofed! Many new cameras have been destroyed by the wet and humid environment in the rainforest (or from leaking water bottles)! Investing in a medium/small drybag is an excellent way to transport your electronics and ensure they stay dry.
- **Lightweight blanket** - Past students suggest bringing one for the very cool nights of April-October (in addition to your sleeping bag).
- **Pocketknife** (Do NOT carry this in your carry-on luggage).
- **A small botanical hand lens** (10x magnification). Recommended for those interested in plants.
- **iPod, MP3 player** – Please bring earphones so others can have quiet time especially if you have small speakers
- **Guitar or other musical instrument** (Note that these are difficult to travel with and may be subject to undesirable storage and weather conditions. Two guitars and a didgeridoo are available to play at the Centre)
- **Journal**
- **A small, packable umbrella** (most useful January-July)
- **A water-proof daypack cover** for rainy days in the field.
- **Games** to play during free time on rainy days at the Center
- **Laundry bag**
- **Earplugs:** Living in one room with up to 6 other people can interrupt your sleeping patterns, especially if they have different routines to yours. Earplugs may help you fall asleep and stay asleep despite other activity within the room.
- **Small Repair Kit:** needle, thread, safety pins, etc
- **Binoculars:** preferably 8 x 40 but anything in the 6 x 30 to 10 x 40 range is fine. If you are interested in birding, we recommend that you pay the extra amount to procure good quality binoculars.

Finances

Listed below is a partial cost estimate for the SFS program in Australia (and New Zealand). The total amount will vary significantly with each individual's pre- and post-program travel plans, souvenir and equipment purchases, and expenses during days off, or weekly incidentals such as snacks, magazines, internet usage offsite, etc. It is very helpful to plan on having access to more money than you think you will spend.

Estimated Costs

Expenditure	Summer 1 or Summer 2	Summer Combined
Airport departure tax. <i>This may be included in the cost of the airline ticket so you should check with your travel agent</i>	\$20	\$20
Spending money (for souvenirs, snacks, meals not on program time, day off activities)	\$400-\$600*	\$800-\$1200
Mid-summer break (5 days)	<i>Only Summer Combined</i>	\$250-\$600
Bird Field Guide (optional purchase in Australian dollars)	\$30	\$30

Past students have found it easiest to bring New Zealand and/or Australian cash (as appropriate), an ATM card and a major credit card for emergency purposes. If you arrive without cash, you should be sure to get some (\$100AUS or more) using your ATM or credit card once you arrive at the airport in Auckland and/or Cairns.

Traveler's checks in U.S. dollars can only be exchanged at banks and the process is extremely time-consuming. **You should not bring U.S. dollars or U.S. traveler's checks.** Note that personal checks are not accepted, even by banks. Major credit cards are generally accepted in New Zealand and Australia and cash advances are possible with VISA, Mastercard, or Cirrus at ATMs (make sure you have a pin number for your credit card).

There are several easily accessible ATMs in Yungaburra and Atherton, where you will have the opportunity to go approximately once a week to buy incidentals. Make sure to inform your bank or credit card company about your plans to travel.

Optional Activities

You will need to pay for any optional activities during your free time. Occasionally, students like to arrange an activity in their free time or arrange to go out at night. Public transportation from the Centre, depending on the destination and number of passengers can range from AU\$5 to AU\$40.

On a free day of the program or after the program ends, some students in the past have arranged to dive or snorkel on the Great Barrier Reef. A day on the reef generally ranges from AU\$160-AU\$250, depending on whether you snorkel or dive, and what equipment you rent.

If you choose to do an overnight away from the Centre, a hostel in Australia will be \$30 AUD. A meal will cost anywhere from \$10-30 AUD ranging from a sandwich to a sit down dinner. Students may have one or two free evenings in Auckland, New Zealand, with accommodation about \$25 NZD per person and meals from \$10-30 NZD.

Some students decide to purchase a Didgeridoo (a musical instrument). Be aware that this costs approximately \$200 AUD to purchase plus \$90 AUD more to ship home. Alternatively, you are allowed two checked bags on Qantas and a packaged didgeridoo could be checked as a second piece of luggage free of charge if you arrive with only one checked bag.

Medical emergencies and bills can become a very important, and often unforeseen expense in Australia. International Insurance is mandatory, although Australian medical facilities will not accept it; they require upfront payment. Most International Insurance companies will reimburse the policy holder once proper documentation of the medical expenses are submitted. SFS and CRS have a very health and safety-oriented program, and we do all we can to ensure that medical visits are minimal. However, everyone must be prepared for accidents when they arise, and we ask that each student have funds available for medical emergencies.

Tips for Living and Studying Abroad

Introduction

Upon arrival to your SFS campus, all students participate in an orientation that provides information specific to the Center and country, including local community and culture, daily Center operations, and relevant risks and hazards. Prior to arrival on program, SFS recommends that students take time to understand the risks associated with travel in a foreign country as well as ways to increase their own personal safety. The following is a useful guide that provides information on best practices when traveling abroad.

Country Information

Visit government websites to learn country-specific information about your destination:

- Bureau of Consular Affairs: www.travel.state.gov
- Overseas Security Advisory Council: www.osac.gov
- CIA World Fact Book: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html

Personal Safety

Understand the potential health and safety hazards you could encounter while traveling. Consider that most incidents resulting in injury or death of students while participating in study abroad involve:

- Transportation and traffic accidents
- Use and abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Sexual harassment and assault
- Crime or theft
- Mental health issues
- Region-specific illnesses

Situational Awareness

Be aware that travelers, especially those who have just arrived abroad, are often a likely target for petty theft or crime. Take steps to protect yourself by being aware of your surroundings.

- Travel in pairs or groups.
 - Avoid traveling alone or being out past local curfew.
 - In the event of confrontation, remain calm and focus on de-escalation and removing yourself from the situation.
- Keep belongings close to your body.
 - Consider leaving valuables or “flashy” jewelry at home or on campus.
 - If carrying valuables, make sure they are not visible or easily accessible in outer pockets of backpacks or purses.

- Be wary of undue attention or affection.
 - Be cautious about accepting food or drink from strangers. Where alcohol is served, keep an eye on your drink at all times and do not accept drinks that you did not see being opened in front of you.
 - Understand that the idea of consent varies between different countries and cultures. The current dialogue and understanding of the concept of consent in the US often does not apply in other cultures. Situational awareness and understanding of local cultures is an important factor in reducing risk in certain situations.
 - Protect yourself from sexually-transmitted diseases by using protection (e.g. condoms) or practicing abstinence. While it may be intriguing to start a relationship in a new country, consider the ramifications that a fleeting or short-term relationship may have within the local community.
- Avoid events that might be prone to civil disturbances, including protests, demonstrations, elections, and anniversaries of difficult events. If you see a protest forming, leave the scene. Even demonstrations meant to be peaceful can turn violent with little or no warning.
- Trust your instincts; if a place does not feel right, move to an alternative location as quickly and safely as possible. If that is not an option, find a secure area and shelter in place.

Local Laws and Cultural Norms

Know the local laws to avoid putting yourself in a situation that could have been easily prevented. Behave maturely and in a way that is respectful of local cultural norms.

- Be aware that there might be country- or region-specific laws on alcohol consumption, smoking, behavior in public (e.g. public displays of affection, public intoxication, behavior at cultural sites, photography, etc.), carrying prescription medications, and many others.
- Wear clothing that is consistent with, and respectful of, local dress. Some monuments and places of worship may require certain parts of the body to be covered.
- Be aware that non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in the United States may be inappropriate or culturally insensitive to people in other countries.
- Be aware of local events or holidays where you are traveling, as some religious events or holidays require a heightened sense of cultural awareness or specific behaviors.

Food Safety

Water used for consumption and food preparation at SFS centers is filtered or boiled. Students are able to access potable drinking water at all times while on campus or on field trips. When off campus, students are encouraged to carry potable water from campus and consider safe drinking and eating practices. Remember:

- Water in many regions is often not potable, including ice, juices, and water for brushing teeth or showering. Be aware of how cups, plates, and utensils are cleaned or rinsed, as food or drink can be contaminated by utensils rinsed in non-potable water.
- If sampling street food, consider how it was prepared. Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish, and shellfish or cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature. Instead, eat food that has been cooked through and is still steaming hot.
- If consuming fruits or vegetables, select options that can be peeled or appropriately washed.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products, including cheeses.

Protection from Insects

When exposure to ticks or biting insects is a possibility, travelers should practice preventative measures:

- Take prophylactic medications where recommended
- Use a chemical-based insect repellent
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing

- Tuck pants into socks and wear closed-toe shoes and long-sleeve shirts
- Be aware of active times of day for insects in the region, and prepare accordingly
- Use a mosquito-net at night, if needed
- Check yourself for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day

Policies

By signing the SFS Terms and Regulations Contract, students agree that they have read, understand, and will abide by all SFS policies. Violation of any policy may result in disciplinary action.

SFS Policies are in effect at all times throughout the full duration of Program Time, including downtime, rest days, and field trips. The SFS Policies function under a set of Operational Objectives, which are common sense principles designed to support SFS centers and their students in functioning safely and successfully. The Operational Objectives include:

- Ensuring the well-being, health, and security of students and staff
- Providing high-quality academic programming
- Maintaining positive and cohesive local community relations
- Maintaining local and international standards necessary to successfully operate all Centers and SFS Headquarters

Students should consider the Operational Objectives at all times in order to prevent circumstances that may prevent them from successfully completing the program, disrupting the program experience of other students, or compromising the ability of SFS to operate. Such circumstances can include injury, preventable illness, reckless behavior, poor judgement, or acting in a way that harms community relations. Through pre-departure literature and program orientation, SFS works to empower students and requires them to manage their behavior in order to achieve the following objectives and aims:

- Taking responsibility for their own behavior
- Being aware of health, safety, and security risks present in the local area or specific to an activity
- Having good situational awareness
- Behaving maturely and in a way that is respectful of local cultural norms
- Knowing the country or region-specific laws
- Maintaining good individual and SFS relationships with the local community and other communities you may encounter

During Non-Program Time, which on certain programs may include designated breaks such as Weekends Away or Mid-Semester Break, certain SFS Policies are not in effect. While not under the full set of SFS policies, students are expected to observe the SFS Operational Objectives at all times.

SFS-Wide Policies

Alcohol Policy

No possession or consumption of alcohol is permitted on SFS property including any SFS vehicles, common areas, student quarters, Center grounds, field trip sites, or during any program activities. Any use of alcohol that in any way compromises the Operational Objectives will be addressed and may include disciplinary action. The permissible drinking

age is defined by the laws of the country that the Center is located in. Centers may have additional restrictions. Please check with the Student Affairs Manager or Center Director regarding pertinent local laws.

Drug Policy

Use or possession of any drugs, chemical or medications that are illegal or interfere with the Operational Objectives of any SFS program or site, is prohibited. Illegal drugs are defined by United States and host-country laws. SFS reserves the right to interview, investigate, search for and confiscate any substances or paraphernalia in violation of this policy. SFS has a zero tolerance illegal drug policy – violation of this policy will result in expulsion. This policy is in force from the beginning to the end of the program, including Non-Program Time.

Violence Policy

There is no place for violence of any kind at SFS. Violence can be verbal as well as physical. Some examples include making threats, verbal intimidation, bullying, aggressive physical contact or behavior otherwise designed to frighten or intimidate. This list is not intended to be comprehensive. Violence of any sort will not be tolerated by SFS and may be grounds for immediate expulsion from the program. This policy is in force from the beginning to the end of the program, including Non-Program Time.

Sign-Out Policy

All students must sign themselves in and out of the Center so that they can be located in case of an emergency.

Visitor Policy

Aside from visiting professionals and guest lecturers, SFS does not allow visitors on site during the program because it is disruptive to the program schedule and the dynamics of the group. For security reasons, no local visitors are allowed on the Center property without prior consent from the Center Director. This policy increases students' and staff's safety, security, and sense of privacy.

Local Laws Policy

SFS supports and complies with all local laws. Students will be briefed on local laws and expectations soon after arriving at the Center. Any violation of a local law will result in SFS disciplinary procedures and in addition, may subject you to local penalties such as fines, arrest, or deportation. This policy is in force from the beginning to the end of the program, including Non-Program Time.

Non-Program Time Policy

During designated Non-Program Time, such as Weekends Away or Mid-Semester Break, students may have the opportunity to travel to other regions of the host country or neighboring countries. During this time, while not under the full set of SFS policies, students are expected to observe the SFS Operational Objectives at all times.

SFS does not provide students with recommendations for activities during Non-Program Time, but informs students about the inherent risks associated with travel and certain activities. Please note that students are responsible for their actions, judgement, safety and well-being during this time.

Prior to travel, students are expected to submit itineraries, including emergency contact information, mode of transportation, and accommodations. Travel to countries currently under a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Warning Level Three are prohibited during the full duration of the program. Additionally, the SFS Safety and Student Life Department may prohibit travel to regions with known or foreseeable political unrest, credible threat of terrorism, unstable weather patterns, or other factors of high risk upon review of student itineraries.

Non-Program Time dates are clearly established by SFS staff and travel must be done within this established time frame. **Individual early departures or late returns will not be permissible.**

Swimming Policy

Swimming is always at your own risk. Where SFS maintains swimming pools or conducts recreational swimming during program time or on SFS property, protocols and guidelines will be presented. Recreational swimming is always optional and may be prohibited on certain programs or in certain regions due to local hazards or cultural practice. In Panama and the Turks and Caicos, where swimming is integral to the program, there will be a swim assessment and orientation to waterfront guidelines. In such cases, students must successfully complete a swim assessment, conducted by trained SFS staff, before participating in any other swim-related activities.

Motor Vehicle/Boating Policy

SFS students may not operate SFS motor vehicles or motor boats. SFS students may not ride in an SFS motor vehicle or motor boat without an SFS-approved operator. Students may not ride in non-SFS motor vehicles or motor boats without prior Center Director approval. Operating or riding on a motorbike, motorcycle, moped, ATV, or motorized recreational watercraft is prohibited for the full duration of the program, including Non-Program Time.

Seatbelts must be worn in all motor vehicles, where available. SFS Centers that utilize motor boats have additional Center-specific protocols including maximum occupancy, approved seating, personal flotation devices, radio protocols, rescue and first aid equipment in compliance with all local regulations.

Sexual Harassment Policy

It is the policy of SFS to respect the rights of students to work and study in an environment free from any type of sexual harassment and to investigate and resolve any reported cases of sexual harassment. Each administrator, faculty member and student is responsible for ensuring a work and learning environment free from sexual harassment. SFS policy specifically prohibits any faculty or staff member from having a sexual relationship with a student at any time while the student is enrolled in an SFS program. In addition, no SFS employee shall threaten, promise, or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that any student's refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect the student's status with SFS, including but not limited to influence on grades or recommendations.

Moreover as a part of its overall nondiscrimination policy, SFS prohibits all forms of harassment of others because of race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual preference, national origin, physical or mental disability, or veteran status. In particular, an atmosphere of tension created by disparaging racial, ethnic, sexual, or religious remarks does not belong in the SFS workplace or learning environment and will not be tolerated.

Campus-Specific Policies

The SFS Center in Australia has policies that are unique to the program, taking into consideration local environmental hazards and the local community and culture. Campus-specific policies may change at the discretion of SFS staff. Upon arrival to campus, students will be presented with a complete list of campus-specific policies; the following list is not exhaustive.

Curfew

Curfew is 11:00 pm on Sunday through Friday. Curfew is 1:00 am on Saturday nights.

Buddy System

Students must be in groups of three or more during hikes after dusk. During the day, students must sign out if going on a hike. Students are not allowed to walk on the Gilles Highway.

Shoes

Students must wear shoes at all times unless in an indoor area. After dusk, students must wear close-toed shoes and carry a headlamp or flashlight.

Swimming

Students may only swim in designated areas when a staff member is present.

Snakes

Students must carry ACE bandages when walking around the Centre or during field work and while hiking. Students must keep a three-meter distance from observed snakes and must alert other people that a snake has been seen. Students should only observe snakes in groups of three or less and not use flash photography so as not to disturb or stress the animal.

Disciplinary Procedures

Violations of any SFS-wide policies, Center-specific rules and protocols and Operational Objectives may result in one or more of the following disciplinary actions:

- Verbal warnings
- Written warnings
- Probation
- Expulsion

All staff and students are expected to understand and to actively support the standards of behavior as presented in our written materials and in our on-site orientations. While all staff are responsible for understanding and enforcing our standards for behavior, all formal disciplinary measures for students are at the discretion of the Center Director in consultation with his or her staff and Headquarters, where appropriate.

Generally speaking, behavioral issues arising out of misunderstandings or that are not overly compromising to SFS Operational Objectives will be addressed with education, clarification and intermediate disciplinary measures (warnings/probation). However, any behavior that significantly compromises the Operational Objectives or any violation of SFS policy may be cause for immediate expulsion. In the event of an offense at the level of Written Warning or above, SFS will contact the student's home institution. SFS also reserves the right to contact parents/guardians in the event of any behavior that potentially compromises the student's ability to participate in our program. In the event that a student is asked to leave the program, SFS will return the student to the point of program departure at his or her own expense. At this time, any and all responsibility on the part of The School for Field Studies will cease. Students who are expelled or who depart early from the program will be withdrawn from all courses and receive no credit. All outstanding financial obligations to SFS remain in full effect.

Insurance

Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance

All SFS students are automatically enrolled in the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan through American International Group, Inc. (AIG). This insurance is effective for the duration of the program and does not cover personal travel before or after the program.

Benefits of the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan include:

- \$350,000 for emergency medical evacuation

- \$100,000 for emergency security evacuation
- \$20,000 for repatriation of remains

The coverage provided by the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan is **NOT** the same as health, medical, or dental insurance. The plan covers the cost of transportation, accommodations, and medical care associated with an evacuation (e.g. life-saving support during transport in an air evacuation), in cases where the evacuation is deemed medically necessary.

This insurance plan does not cover urgent or emergency medical care, basic medical care, laboratory tests, or pharmacy needs.

Therefore, students on SFS programs are required to supply their own health insurance, valid in the country or countries in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program.

Health Insurance

Students on SFS programs are required to supply their own health insurance, valid in the country or countries in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program. Students are not allowed to join an SFS program without identifying such coverage.

Students looking to obtain health insurance should keep in mind the following:

- Most domestic health insurance plans do not cover out-of-country medical expenses. Students should check with their policy provider on what services are available out-of-country.
- Students should check to see if their home institution provides or offers international health insurance.
- Most insurance companies provide international coverage on a reimbursable basis, as most foreign public or private medical care facilities do not accept insurance for payment. Therefore, **students need to carry cash and/or a high-limit credit card to pay for medical expenses up front**, and then request reimbursement when they return home.

In the event that a student requires medical attention during a program, a staff member will accompany him or her on the visit(s) to a medical care facility. Students are liable for all incidental expenses, including medical costs, transportation, accommodations, etc., incurred by all parties involved during these visits. Students must pay in full for these expenses prior to departure from the program.

Personal Property Insurance

SFS does not provide insurance for personal property of students, staff, and visitors.

Travel Insurance

SFS does not provide travel insurance or reimbursement for trip cancellation. Students can look into options for travel insurance through their personal travel agent or through Advantage Travel.

Health and Safety

Introduction

Every region has its own unique health challenges. Statistically, the most common injuries sustained by students on SFS programs are recreational in nature and the most common medical problem is traveler's diarrhea. However, international traveling and living presents potentially significant health and safety risks and challenges.

24-Hour Emergency Hotline

If a parent or guardian needs to urgently contact a student in the field, an emergency call can be made to the **SFS 24-hour Emergency Hotline: 978-741-3544**. After dialing, press “2” when prompted to leave an emergency message and to receive a call back from the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. For non-emergency inquiries while a student is in the field, a message can be sent to safety@fieldstudies.org.

Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications

Students should bring enough prescription and/or over-the-counter (OTC) medication to last the entire duration of the program. This also applies to any personal travel that may be done before or after the program. If you are having difficulty procuring the full amount of medication, please alert the SFS Safety and Student Life Department immediately, as most medications cannot be replaced or refilled once in country, including common OTC medications. It is important to note that it is illegal to send medications through the mail and this will result in confiscation, criminal charges, or deportation.

While traveling, keep all medications in their original container to avoid issues through border control and customs. Note all medication on the SFS Online Medical Review Form and please alert the Safety and Student Life Department to any changes, including dosage. It is highly recommended that students do not discontinue or alter the dose of certain prescription medications before or during the program. Please consult with your prescribing physician and the Safety and Student Life Department with any questions.

Dietary Requirements

If you have a medically-necessary dietary requirement, you must contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department within one week of acceptance. All dietary restrictions or preferences (e.g. gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, etc.) should be noted on the SFS Online Medical Review Form and discussed with either your Admissions Counselor or the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. SFS is able to accommodate most dietary needs, but variety of food may be limited due to local availability, cultural practice, and cost.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Students requesting physical and health accommodations should contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. Students requesting learning accommodations should contact the SFS Office of Academic Affairs. SFS will work with students, home institutions, and physicians to determine the required level of accommodation and whether or not it can be safely and reasonably maintained on program. While SFS strives to make accommodations for most disabilities, due to the remote nature of the programs, there are varying levels of accessibility, services, and accommodations at each SFS center.

Physical Conditioning

Field work by its very nature is physically arduous: the days are long, the traveling seldom comfortable, and creature comforts generally lacking. The program involves a few fairly strenuous hikes as part of the academic program, so physical conditioning is strongly advised. In order to withstand the pace and rigors of the program as well as any “foreign” health risks of the country, it is strongly advised that you be in good physical health. Due to the humidity and temperatures, SFS has noted that chronic health problems often flare up, even if they are under control in the U.S. You should discuss such conditions seriously with your physician and SFS Admissions or the SFS Safety and Student Life Department to see if this SFS program will be right for you.

Existing Medical Conditions

Students must note any current or past medical conditions on the SFS Online Medical Review Form. If you have any medical conditions that could lead to sudden illness, such as allergies to foods or insect stings, asthma, chronic heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, or others, you must inform the SFS Safety and Student Life Department.

If you carry any critical medications (e.g. Epi-Pens, inhalers, glucagon, etc.), you must carry them with you at all times while on program.

If you have asthma, even if you have not had any issues in recent years, it is strongly recommended to bring an inhaler on program. Past students have found that their asthma can be triggered by environmental conditions (e.g. humidity, heat, dust, elevation, allergies, etc.) of certain program locations. Keep in mind, you may be exposed to allergens or environmental conditions you have not been exposed to in the past.

If you have a severe allergy or a family history of severe allergies, even if the reaction has been minor in the past, it is strongly recommended to bring two or more Epi-Pens with you on program. Due to the remote nature of the program, access to medical care can be delayed. In addition, you may be exposed to allergens that you have not been exposed to in the past, as well as the possibility of repeat exposures. Please contact the Safety and Student Life Department with any questions or concerns.

Be certain to take care of any existing medical issues before arriving in country. Due to the remote nature of the program, medical care is not always easily accessible. You may be responsible for all costs acquired to reach advanced medical care for treatment of pre-existing or non-emergency issues, including transportation and accommodations for yourself and an accompanying staff member.

Medical Care in Australia and New Zealand

Each SFS Center has a Student Affairs Manager (SAM) who is responsible for risk management, health, and safety on program. SAMs are certified Wilderness First Responders (WFR) and can provide initial first aid in the event of an illness or injury. If further medical care is needed, SFS staff will accompany the student(s) to the nearest and best available medical care facility. In the event of an emergency or hospitalization, SFS will contact appropriate emergency contacts as necessary.

The SFS Center in Australia is located 30 minutes from a modern hospital in Atherton and one hour from a major metropolitan hospital. On field trips or excursions, access to medical care can be further delayed, depending on the location. SFS subscribes to an ambulance service and has access to helicopter evacuation.

In New Zealand we are within 1-2 hours drive of major hospitals; emergency clinics within 30 minutes. Ambulance would have to be paid for from travel insurance.

Keep in mind that most insurance companies provide international coverage on a reimbursable basis, as most foreign public or private medical care facilities do not accept insurance for payment. Therefore, **students need to carry cash and/or a high-limit credit card to pay for medical expenses up front**, and then request reimbursement when they return home.

There are some medical emergencies or conditions that may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program, including injuries and illnesses such as infectious mononucleosis, malaria, or orthopedic injuries that result in reduced mobility. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS in conjunction with the treating physician.

Disease in Australia and New Zealand

SFS requires that all students consult with a travel medicine clinic or physician who can look at the personal travel itinerary and medical history to develop a health strategy for travel, including appropriate vaccinations, medications, etc.

To locate a nearby travel medicine clinic, ask the Study Abroad Office at your university for recommendations. Your university may provide these services on campus. Alternatively, you can look up nearby travel medicine clinics on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: www.cdc.gov/travel

CDC-Recommended Vaccinations for Travelers to Australia and New Zealand

For a list of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended vaccinations, visit the CDC website at: www.cdc.gov/travel. **Be sure to schedule your appointment at least six weeks prior to departure, as some vaccinations require a series of doses over a specific time frame.**

Non-Vaccine Preventable Disease in Australia and New Zealand

There are a number of non-vaccine preventable insect-borne diseases found in the Queensland region and protective measures are recommended. If you plan to travel in the Pacific outside of Australia or in Asia, the health risks may be very different, and you should consult with a travel medicine specialist as to what additional measures may be required.

Dengue is a viral infection that can cause a very severe flu-like illness. Subsequent exposures can cause symptoms to increase in severity. While rare, severe cases of dengue can be fatal. The disease is transmitted by mosquitoes and is becoming increasingly common in many tropical countries. There is no vaccine against dengue available. Preventative measures include chemical-based mosquito repellent and protective clothing (e.g. lightweight, loose-fitting, long sleeves and pants).

Zika Virus is a mild viral infection that causes flu-like symptoms, including fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis. The primary concern for Zika virus, as stated by the CDC, is for women who are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant. In rarer cases, incidents of Guillain-Barre syndrome and other neurological disorders have been reported. The virus is transmitted by the same mosquito that carries dengue (active during the daytime), so preventative measures are the same: chemical-based mosquito repellent and protective clothing (e.g. lightweight, loose-fitting, long sleeves and pants). While there have not been reported cases of Zika virus in Queensland, the mosquito that carries the disease is present in the region.

Diarrhea is the most common ailment that students encounter. Diarrhea can be caused by a number of different factors, including 1) the process of acclimating to a new environment or new foods, 2) stress or other emotional challenges, 3) use of certain medications, and 4) infections caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Shortly after arriving in country, students participate in an orientation that explains the importance of diligent hand washing, personal hygiene, kitchen hygiene, careful food handling, and water purification. These are important preventative measures that all students are expected to closely follow throughout the full duration of the program. Students who do experience diarrhea are encouraged to inform the Student Affairs Manager or other SFS staff member so that they may receive the proper treatment, which may include oral rehydration, a bland diet, and potentially a visit to the local medical clinic for diagnostics and medication, if necessary. Prior to coming on program, some students are prescribed an antibiotic for “traveler’s diarrhea” by a home physician or travel clinic. If this is the case, it is highly recommended to consult with the Student Affairs Manager at the onset of diarrhea, prior to starting this medication. Overuse or improper dosage, attempting treatment for a non-bacterial or non-parasitic cause of diarrhea, or failure to properly complete treatment could result in a persistent or worsening condition.

Other Hazards in Australia and New Zealand

Some of the hazards associated with this SFS program, field work and living in Australia are described below. While SFS has tried to anticipate as many risks as possible, you may nonetheless encounter risks that are not described below.

Heat/Humidity: Dehydration occurs easily in hot environments. A conscious effort should be made to replace fluids lost through evaporation, which can be as much as two quarts an hour when physically active.

Venomous Snakes: Several species of venomous snakes inhabit Queensland and can be found on the Center property. Students are required to wear close-toed shoes and carry a flashlight when walking after dusk. Upon arrival, students are provided with an orientation on snake precautions. At no time are students to handle snakes.

Crocodiles: Crocodiles are common in estuarine and coastal mangrove waters along the Queensland coast and are a serious hazard to those who swim in these areas. Students are not permitted to swim in any of these areas. Swimming in the lower calm sections of most freshwater rivers is also hazardous and prohibited on program. Students may only swim in designated areas when a staff member is present.

Stinging Trees: The leaves of some trees are covered with tiny silica hairs that inflict a painful sting that lasts from several days to several months. There is no effective treatment for the sting. Students will be taught to identify these plants during program orientation.

Leeches: Leeches are commonly encountered in Australia, particularly during the wet season. Leeches do not carry diseases, although some people experience local itching and swelling if bitten.

Ticks: Ticks are fairly common during the dry season. Most are harmless and can simply be removed with tweezers. Bites from the rare shellback tick have been known to cause paralysis or even death in a few rare instances. No serious problems with these ticks have been experienced by SFS students. Under normal circumstances and health, victims suffer only mild discomfort. Students will be taught how to prevent and identify ticks during program orientation.

Sun Exposure: The possibility of sunburn is very real. Students should bring one bottle of waterproof sunscreen of at least 30 SPF for each month of the program. Not only for short-term comfort but also for long-term health, you need to wear sunscreen at all times while outdoors. Also, bring a hat with a brim, sunglasses, and lightweight, long-sleeved, light colored clothing to wear in the sun. Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.

Cultural Adjustment

Defining Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment is the process of adjusting to a different cultural context. It is the process of filtering through initially identifiable differences in customs, language, eating style, and more to discover the underlying values and assumptions that are the foundation of a certain way of life. Whether you are from the United States or from another country, encountering another way of life may entail questioning your own basic values and beliefs. Cultural adjustment may beg of you to ask the question, “Who am I?” By asking such a fundamental question and working through the answers, you can build a strong sense of self, gain more confidence in who you are, learn to identify at a basic level with people from any background, and become more accepting of others. At this point, you will have begun to develop a sense of global citizenship.

Think about how you are feeling now as you prepare to go abroad with an SFS program. Are you feeling excited? Nervous? Overwhelmed? Ready?

Now, think about how you might feel when you first arrive in your host country. Will you feel exhilarated? Overwhelmed by the newness of it all? Jet-lagged? Perhaps frustrated or humbled by the reality that you are unable to communicate as well as you are accustomed?

How will your emotions and thoughts change with time after the initial excitement of arrival? Will you be amazed and/or frustrated by the differences between how things are done at home and how things are done at your new home abroad? Confronted with these differences, will you question values you held and always thought to be “right”? Will you grow in depth of thought and sense of self?

It may seem like a very long time from now, but imagine returning home after study abroad. How do you hope you have changed as a result of your time abroad? How will others see your new personal, cultural, social, and academic developments? Will it be easy to reconnect with family, friends, and your community? Will it take effort? How will you communicate your experiences and developments and help loved ones take part in an important period of your life?

Experiencing some difficulty adjusting to your new environment is normal and even important for personal development. The flow of emotions and experiences above describes the cultural adjustment process that many students move through before, during, and after their study abroad terms.

Cycling through Cultural Adjustment: The “W” Curve



Based on Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn & Gallahorn (1963)

The model above puts into visual format the process of cultural adjustment previously described.

Arrival: Upon arrival, many students are exhilarated by the myriad of new sights, sounds, and smells of their host country. You may feel physically exhausted from the travel, and you may need to give your body time and care to help it adjust to the different weather, geographic conditions, food, and time schedule. During this initial period, you may experience a variety of heightened emotions.

Culture Shock: After the initial excitement period, you may begin to notice the many differences between your home and your new home abroad. Processing these differences may be difficult, and many students report emotions of anxiety, stress, confusion, homesickness, discouragement, hostility toward the local culture and customs, and even depression. You may experience physical symptoms such as colds, headaches, or stomach upsets. On the other hand, some students experience very little culture shock.

Recovery: With effort and time, you will get your legs back under you again. You may wish to employ some of the coping strategies listed in the next section, or find your own way to regain and rethink equilibrium.

Adaptation: At this stage, students have renegotiated belief systems and “the way things are done.” You may feel at home in your residence abroad.

Returning Home: Some students find that just when they have become comfortable with their surroundings abroad, it is time to return home! Because you are traveling back to a familiar place, you may not expect to experience reverse

culture shock, which mirrors the culture shock process. Many students experience re-entry culture shock more severely than they do culture shock. The best way to smooth the reverse culture shock process is to prepare for it before, during, *and* after your time abroad. Make sure to share your experiences and personal development with family and friends so that they can take part in your growth. Continuous communication in a spirit of sharing (rather than expecting or needing others to understand) will greatly smooth the reentry process.

New Experiences, New Ways of Thinking

Perhaps this is your first time visiting a foreign country for an extended period. By removing yourself from the US or your country of origin and being confronted with difference, you may gain a greater awareness of what it means to be from your home country.

In part because of the US' prominent media and political and economic presence, you may find that people around the world have formed viewpoints, even stereotypes about Americans. Stereotypes are not always accurate, and they do not apply to every person within a culture. Be aware of the possible negative impact of stereotyping, both for yourself and also in how you may be viewed. Be open to and appreciative of the great differences between individuals within a population.

A Note to Women and Diverse Students

What it means to identify as LGBTQ, a woman, a person of color, a member of a certain religious group, a participant with a disability, etc. may be very different in your host country than at home. You may find that the host community is much less accepting than your home university community. Students who are accustomed to being part of the majority group at home may need to readjust to living as a minority abroad.

There is more information about women and underrepresented students traveling abroad than it is possible to cover in this section. Please use the resources below to better inform yourself as you prepare for your abroad experience.

- Women (Women Travel Tips): www.womentraveltips.com/index.shtml
- LGBT Students (StudyAbroad.com): <http://www.studyabroad.com/resources/lgbt-students-and-study-abroad>
- LGBT Students (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association): www.allabroad.us
- Students with Disabilities (Mobility International USA): www.miusa.org

Coping With Cultural Adjustment

What are some tricks for coping with and growing through the cultural adjustment process?

- Keep a journal. Write about the experiences, emotions, and thoughts that you have.
- Take care of your physical body. Be sure to get sufficient exercise, and take care of your body's nutritional needs. Get enough rest and sleep.
- Communicate. If you are feeling particularly down, approach a friend, staff member, or mentor. Sometimes just talking about difficulties you are facing makes the burden seem lighter. Many of the people surrounding you at the Center have experienced or are experiencing the same cultural adjustment process as you. There is strength and growth in sharing.
- Step out of your comfort zone. When everything around us is new, we sometimes just want to withdraw. Practice your language skills with community members. Try delicious foods you had never heard of before. Take advantage of your abroad experience, because you will not have the same exact opportunity again!

The above are just a few small examples of strategies for facing cultural adjustment. There is a multitude of ways that individuals process and adjust, and you may discover other strategies that work particularly well for you.

Everyone at The School for Field Studies extends a warm welcome to you and looks forward to seeing you in the field!