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THE SCHOOL FOR FIELD STUDIES
PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE
MEET THE SFS TEAM

As you prepare for an SFS program, you will work with a few different folks at SFS Headquarters. So, here’s a quick guide for getting your questions answered!

General Questions? Our Enrollment Coordinator works with students as they submit materials through the SFS portal. You can contact them with questions about applying for SFS Financial Aid, submitting application materials, inquiries about which program is the best fit for you, or questions about the admissions process in general.

Contact the Enrollment Coordinator at admissions@fieldstudies.org.

Program specific questions or questions about your enrollment in the program? Your SFS Admissions Counselor will be your main point of contact during the admissions and pre-departure process. They will help you through the application steps, conduct your interview for admission, support you through your enrollment steps, and guide you through all travel and visa logistics. You can contact your admissions counselor with any specific questions related to this program.

Contact your SFS Admissions Counselor at admissions@fieldstudies.org.

Questions about the billing process? Our student billing team works with students, schools, and families to coordinate payments for SFS programs. You can contact them with any questions about deposit payments, invoices, charges to your account, financial aid packages, billing deadlines, or loan paperwork.

Contact the billing department at billing@fieldstudies.org.

Questions about medical approval or health and safety? Our Safety and Student Life team conducts the SFS Medical Approval Process for SFS students. You can get in touch with them to ask questions about immunizations, safety in the field, managing a medical condition during your program, dietary needs and preferences, and your Magnus Health portal.

Contact the Safety and Student Life team at safety@fieldstudies.org.

Questions about learning accommodations? The Office of Academic Affairs coordinates with our staff and faculty in the field to assess options for learning accommodations. Students who have learning accommodations on their home campus should contact the Office of Academic Affairs after accepted to an SFS program, and prior to entering the field. More information can be found in the Academic Handbook for this program.

Contact the Office of Academic Affairs at academics@fieldstudies.org.

Want to learn more about the SFS HQ team? Find the full list of the SFS team bios here!

Want to learn more about the people you’ll work with in the field? Find their bios here!

SFS ONLINE RESOURCES

We have many helpful resources on our website. Here are a few to save and reference:

- Admissions Overview
- SFS Blog
- Program Costs and Billing
- SFS Financial Aid
- Preparing for Departure
- Learn more about the SFS Center for Rainforest Studies
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Booking your flights
Students will work closely with their admissions counselor to arrange their travel and are responsible for the cost of these flights. **Students will receive specific travel instructions about 3-4 months prior to the start of their SFS program** – do not book flights before receiving these instructions.

Arrival to your program
SFS staff will meet students at the airport on the date and at the time specified in the travel instructions and will provide transportation to the Center. If you plan to arrive in country before the set arrival date for personal travel, please contact your admissions counselor.

SFS is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power, or communications.

PASSPORT AND VISA

You must have a passport to enter all the countries where you plan to travel. Make certain that your passport is valid until six months after your intended departure. You must have your valid passport in-hand four months prior to the start of the program. If you will not be able to meet this timeline, please contact your admissions counselor.

Your admissions counselor will provide more information about the visa process for this program 3-4 months prior to the start date and will guide you through this process.

Non-US citizens may require a different visa process. Please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss.
MEDICAL PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD

SFS Medical Approval Process
As part of enrollment in an SFS program, students are required to complete the SFS Medical Approval Process. This review is designed to inform SFS staff of the medical and mental health needs or accommodations that may be required. The review is not meant to exclude, but to inform and allow support systems to be put in place. Should SFS have any concerns about accommodations for a physical or mental health condition, the student and the student’s physician or mental health provider will be contacted to discuss strategies for successful program participation.

The medical review process will be completed using a HIPAA-compliant online portal. Any forms required will be accessible via this portal and can be submitted electronically. Students will receive instructions for setting up their account after acceptance as part of the enrollment process.

No student may enter the field until final medical approval is granted by SFS personnel. This includes receipt and review of:

- **SFS Vital Health Record**: To be completed by the student through the Magnus Health Portal.
- **Physical Exam and Authorization Form**: To be completed by a physician, physician’s assistant, or registered nurse practitioner who is not related to the student.
- **Supplemental documentation from a medical specialist** if determined necessary by SFS. This may include information regarding counseling history and documentation of prescription medications.

As part of your medical review, you may be required to complete a phone call with one of our team members to discuss preparation and expectations for the program. The SFS Safety and Student Life team will contact you directly to schedule this call after submission of your Vital Health Record.

Be certain to address any existing medical issues before arriving in country. Students are responsible for informing SFS of any changes to their health status that occur after submission of the SFS medical forms. 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.

**Accommodating Students with Disabilities**
Students requesting physical and mental health accommodations should contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. Students requesting learning accommodations should contact the SFS Office of Academic Affairs, as outlined in the Academic Handbook for this program. SFS will work with students, home institutions, and physicians to determine the required level of accommodation and whether 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.

**Accommodating Dietary Needs and Preferences**
If you have a medically necessary dietary requirement, please contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. All dietary restrictions or preferences (e.g. gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, etc.) should be noted on the SFS Vital Health Record and discussed with either your admissions counselor or the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. SFS can accommodate most dietary needs, but variety of food may be limited due to local availability, cultural practice, and cost.

**Insurance**

**Health Insurance**
Students on SFS programs are required to procure their own comprehensive health insurance, valid in the country (or countries) in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program. SFS does not review individual insurance policies to ensure comprehensive international coverage; it is the students’ responsibility to ensure that the insurance coverage meets the following requirements:

- Valid in the program country or countries. Keep in mind trip itineraries for any personal pre- or post-program travel.
- Provides coverage for the full duration of the program, including any personal pre- or post-program travel.
- Covers more than only emergency medical care. Look for a comprehensive medical insurance plan that includes coverage for basic medical care, including non-urgent illness or injury (i.e. gastrointestinal distress, ear infections, ankle sprains, etc.), laboratory tests, and pharmaceutical needs.
Students looking to obtain health insurance should keep the following in mind:

- Most domestic health insurance plans do not provide comprehensive coverage for 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 international health insurance. Please note that home universities may have their own insurance requirements for participation in study abroad.
- 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 should bring sufficient funds (i.e. a credit card with a high limit of at least $3,000) to pay for medical expenses up front, and then request reimbursement when they return home.

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 comprehensive health insurance, valid in the country or countries in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program as outlined in the previous section.

Medical Consultation
SFS recommends that students schedule a consultation with a travel doctor or physician at least 60 days prior to program departure to complete the Physical Examination and Authorization Form (available through the Magnus Health Portal) and review the following topics:

Physical Conditioning
Field work by its very nature is physically arduous: the days are long, the traveling seldom comfortable, and familiar comforts generally lacking. SFS programs involve some strenuous activities, including hikes over steep and uneven terrain, open-ocean swimming, long days in the rain, hot sun, or wind. All SFS programs involve multiple hours of standing or walking during field exercises as part of the academic program. We don’t require students to be Olympic athletes, but consider that these programs require physical stamina, energy, and a positive attitude!

Existing Medical Conditions
Due to the rigorous nature of the program and stress of travel, existing and chronic health issues can be triggered or exacerbated while abroad, even if currently well-managed or in remission in the US. You should discuss all medical conditions with your physician and the SFS Safety and Student Life Department to see if this SFS program will be right for you. Consult with your physician and/or specialists and inform the SFS Safety and Student Life Department of any medical conditions that could lead to sudden illness, such as allergies to foods or insect stings, asthma, chronic heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.

- Make sure to bring and carry on your person at all times any critical medications (Epi-Pens, inhalers, glucagon, etc.).
- If you have asthma, even if you have not had any issues in recent years, it is strongly recommended to bring your inhaler (and a back-up inhaler, as these can generally not be sourced in country) 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.

**Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications**

Students should bring enough over the counter (OTC) and prescription medication (including any prophylactic medication that may be recommended by your travel doctor or physician for travel to your program country) 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.**

**Make sure to consider the following:**

- Insurance companies typically do not dispense more than a three-month supply of medication, so you will need to work with both your prescribing physician and insurance provider to request a “Vacation Override” or other means to procure a supply for 100+ days.
- Supply of controlled substances and steroid medications may have additional restrictions, so we recommend starting conversations as early as possible with your prescribing physician and insurance provider.
- In the event of unprotected sexual encounters or activity, please be aware that prophylactic sexually transmitted infection (STI) medication and emergency contraception are often difficult to obtain while abroad due to availability and legal implications. Consult with your physician about options for preparedness.
- Medical marijuana is prohibited on our programs due to host-country laws, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and Transport Security Administration (TSA) restrictions. If you currently use medical marijuana, please discuss alternative options with your physician. Travel with some types of Cannabidiol (CBD) oil is also currently restricted by the FAA and TSA and may be restricted or illegal by host-country law.

While traveling, keep all medications in their original container and in carry-on luggage to avoid issues through border control and customs. List all medications on the **SFS Vital Health Record** and please alert the Safety and Student Life Department to any changes to your medication list, including dosage, as early as possible. 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.

**Mental Health**

Studying abroad can be an exciting and energizing time for students. It can also present myriad challenges, including adjustment to a new culture and daily routine, unfamiliarity with the local environment, forming of new relationships, and a lack of familiar support systems. In addition, SFS programs operate in remote regions with delayed access to medical care and limited or absent mental health resources.

Students with mental health conditions should discuss any concerns with their physician, mental health provider, and the SFS Safety and Student Life Department prior to participation on an SFS program. Students who undergo regular counseling or therapy should verify that their mental health provider is available via phone, email, or other means of telecommunication while the student is abroad. Keep in mind that some mental health providers have jurisdiction restrictions when it comes to client communication. It is important to check-in with your mental health provider and see what availability they may have during your time abroad. SFS will also work with students to develop a set of coping strategies that can be utilized while studying abroad, in addition to preparing them for what to expect in their individual host countries. To read more about self-care while abroad, please see “Self-Care and Wellbeing.”
Vaccinations and Prophylactic Medication
SFS does not require any specific vaccinations or prophylactic medications for participation on program with respect to logistics or programming. However, SFS strongly recommends that all students consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and a travel clinic or medical provider to determine recommended vaccinations and prophylactic medication for travel to the program country. This consultation should consider medical history, personal travel itinerary (i.e. pre- or post-program travel, mid-semester break, etc.), and regional risk factors.

SFS strongly recommends that all students are up to date with routine vaccinations (i.e. MMR, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, etc.) to protect themselves as well as vulnerable populations in country that may not have access to preventative vaccinations. In addition, there are a number of non-vaccine preventable insect-borne diseases that are present in country. For up-to-date information on risk-factors, prevention, and treatment, please visit the CDC Travel webpage: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/

Protection from Insects
Students should practice preventative measures to reduce the possibility of illness from exposure to insects:

- Take prophylactic medications where recommended
- Be aware of active times of day for insects in the region, and prepare accordingly
- Use a DEET-based insect repellent
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, socks tucked into pants, and fully enclosed shoes
- Use a mosquito-net at night, if needed
- Check yourself for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day

Food and Water Safety
Water used for consumption and food preparation at SFS centers is filtered or boiled. Students are always able to access potable drinking water 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 thoroughly cooked, 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.

Altitude
If your program includes travel to higher altitudes (generally considered above 8,000 feet in elevation), please discuss preparedness, including the use of prophylactic medication and any implications considering your personal medical history (i.e. asthma, prior altitude-related illness, heart conditions, diabetes, etc.). SFS does not make recommendations on use of prophylactic medication for altitude. Please consult with your physician or travel doctor with any questions.
IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN A NEW CONTEXT

On your SFS program, you will engage with people that come from a variety of cultural contexts. Most SFS students expect to encounter differences between themselves and those from the host country culture, but don’t realize that some of the most significant cultural differences they may face will be between themselves and members of their own student group. Reflecting on your own culture and identity before studying abroad with SFS can help you better navigate your experience abroad.

How do we define culture?
Culture is defined as the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people. It is also a system for making meaning of things, and, as a result, we all wear cultural lenses or filters when we interpret a situation. Most of us are unaware of our own culture until we experience another.

Cultural Values
Each cultural group has a set of underlying values. These values affect our behavior and the way we perceive the behaviors of others. The table below lists several common U.S. values and prompts you to consider how other cultures or people might have values that differ. Of course, not everyone from the same cultural group shares the same set of underlying values in that culture. Therefore, it is helpful to think of cultural values existing along a continuum. By being open to and curious about another set of cultural values, we can connect with others more easily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Values</th>
<th>Consider</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>In the U.S., it is common to value change and novelty over tradition and the ways of the past. Do you tend to embrace change and think towards the future, or hold onto tradition and value the past? How might this impact cultural views surrounding issues like climate change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Its Control</td>
<td>Punctuality is valued highly in U.S. culture. Many U.S. Americans live very scheduled lives, abiding strictly by time commitments and tardiness is not accepted most U.S. contexts. In other cultures, human interaction is generally valued more than time commitments and timeliness. It may be acceptable to be 30 minutes late to a commitment if it means stopping to talk with an acquaintance on the street or spending time with family or friends. Do you feel the pull of time in your daily life? What are some ways that a cultural difference in perception of time might impact you while abroad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>U.S. culture tends to emphasize equality over hierarchy and social status. While inequality in the U.S. certainly exists, there remains a culture of democracy, self-determination, and an expectation for equal treatment. Other cultures place a greater emphasis on hierarchy and social rank. Think of countries where there is not a democratic tradition and where it is expected to respect and honor the government, prevailing religion(s), and certain cultural beliefs. Think of how it may be different to be expected to honor certain members of society, such as a monarch or elders. In some cultures, foreigners, or specifically Westerners, may be regarded highly or given special treatment. Consider how you may need to adapt to your host culture, and how this might be different from what you are used to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>There is a common emphasis on the individual in the U.S. There is an idea that if you – personally – work hard, you can determine your future success. There are a lot of expectations put on the self in the U.S. Think about how commonplace it is to set personal goals or focus on enriching your personal knowledge and skills. Being unique and standing out is often desired and valued. In contrast, other cultures place a greater emphasis on a sense of belonging within a group rather than standing out. Instead of self-reliance, it may be more customary to rely on advice or assistance from others. It is often expected to help others and share knowledge and resources more so than in a more individualistic culture. Where does your culture fall into this continuum? How will you navigate being in a culture that might be more collectivistic or more individualistic than you are used to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness, Openness, Honesty</td>
<td>In the U.S., there is a tendency to express opinions, thoughts, and dissent openly and directly. U.S. culture often values openness and candor about beliefs and emotions. Other cultures may have a more indirect communication style where it is not typical to express dissent or emotions directly and confrontation is avoided. In many cultures, it is important to avoid humiliation or embarrassment in what is called “saving face.” In these cultures, people tend to express disagreement or emotion in more subtle, indirect ways. Be cognizant of how you may want to adapt your communication style while abroad. Have you considered this cultural difference before?</td>
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</table>
**Local Laws and Customs**

When studying abroad, it’s important that you be prepared to take responsibility for your actions in a new place, as local laws and customs are likely different than the ones you are used to at home. The field staff will go into more detail about local laws and customs during SFS Orientation, but please consider the following:

- 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.
- Appropriate clothing that is consistent with, and respectful of, local dress may be required. Some monuments and places of worship may require certain parts of the body to be covered.
- Non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in your home country may be inappropriate or culturally insensitive to people in other countries.
- Local events or holidays may occur where you are traveling, and some religious events or holidays require a heightened sense of cultural awareness or specific behaviors.

You can play an active role in keeping yourself safe and successfully adjusting to a new culture by learning about local laws and culture. It is always important to practice situational awareness and is even more so when in a new place.

**Your Role in the Community**

During your SFS program, you are a member of several communities.

- The first is the SFS community. We will foster a supportive, stimulating learning community where our actions and behaviors are governed by a set of common values we will define as a group.
- Second, you will be part of an international research and learning community. This comprises a professional staff, local contacts, community partners, elected officials, and SFS support staff.
- Third, you will be a temporary resident to the local community. There are many occasions when you will be expected to interact with the local residents in both academic and informal settings.

Note that it is a great privilege to study in another country and be welcomed into these communities. We want to ensure that we demonstrate an awareness of this privilege and respect for the country and culture. While we will be learning about the country and its people, each of you will be an ambassador of your own culture, country, and school. SFS is a place-based program and our campuses are permanent fixtures in the community. These communities are home to our staff members who live either on-campus or nearby year-round. This is distinct from a tour or casual visit to your host country and it is important to consider how your interactions with the local community can last beyond your time abroad. Behavior that is disrespectful, illegal, or contrary to cultural norms can degrade the relationship with the community and can impede healthy and meaningful interactions for your peers, SFS staff members, and future students. Thoughtful and purposeful interactions with the members of the local community will greatly enhance your study abroad experience!

**Identity**

As you plan to study abroad with SFS, consider how different aspects of your identity might be perceived in a new cultural context. All countries and communities have cultural values and societal norms that are woven into the fabric of their collective identities. These norms and values are important to these communities whether we agree with them or not. You will be a guest in your host culture(s), and it is not your role to change the culture or its values. Reflecting about your own identity will help you navigate this experience.

All aspects of your identity have the potential to be impacted, challenged, and strengthened while abroad. You may find that a part of your identity that is very important to you on your home campus is not as relevant amongst your peers at SFS. Or you may find that an aspect of your identity that is less significant to you at home is an important part of how people in your host culture perceive you.

Remember that you are part of a cohort and that your identity will vary from that of your peers. Each student’s background will inform their understanding of and response to a new situation. An important part of being a member of a team is supporting each other, even when you have differences of opinion or perspective. The more open you can be to that varied experience, the more you will thrive and the better you will be able to support your peers, as well. We’re in this together!
For Your Consideration

No place is 100% free of discrimination and intolerance. Every country is shaped by its respective histories, and therefore attitudes towards gender identity, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic relations, and religious diversity can differ greatly from those in the U.S.

Your identities may grant and/or deny you power and privilege with local people, as well as your fellow peers.

You may find that people in your host culture are more direct and have less concern with political correctness than in the U.S. Keep in mind that local people may have never encountered a person like you. Therefore, what seems like discrimination may simply be curiosity.

Researching the country that you will be living in can help you prepare yourself for the situations you may encounter abroad. In specific, you may want to research the following topics of the country you will be living in:

- Current political and societal issues
- Minority, majority, and plurality racial and ethnic composition
- History of racial and ethnic relations
- LGBTQIA climate
- Religious breakdown
- Cultural norms

We encourage you to connect with your SFS Admissions Counselor if you would like to talk about your identity abroad. Another great resource is to connect with a student who has participated on the program before through the Alumni Contact list. Students on the Alumni Contact list have shared topics they feel comfortable talking about, which makes connecting with a student who identifies similarly to you very easy. You can find the Alumni Contact list on your “Resources” tab in your SFS portal after you are accepted to the program, or request that your SFS Admissions Counselor email this list while you are still in the application process. We encourage you to use alumni as a resource before departure!
LIFE IN THE FIELD:
WHAT TO EXPECT
ABOUT SFS AUSTRALIA

Rainforest isn’t usually the word associated with ‘Australia.’ The tropical rainforests of Australia cover less than .01% of the country. These forests are found in a narrow, broken belt along the northeast coast of the state of Queensland. The forests are bordered to the east by the Great Barrier Reef and to the west by a “sea” of dry grasslands and eucalypt savannas. In this thin strip of lush landscape (designated as the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area) endemic species, relics of the vast super-continent Gondwanaland, survive. 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. 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. The Victoria’s riflebird, a bird of paradise, and three species of bowerbird have been recorded at the Centre.

Aside from the wildlife, the rainforests of the region are a fascinating ecosystem of study as they have been subjected to the abuses that rainforests the world over are now experiencing, only for a longer period. Now, Australia's rainforests are protected. Yet, there is an ongoing struggle with local governments, resource managers and communities to ensure the health of the rainforests while also the health of the local economy. 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 Centre for Rainforest Studies' academic and research program emphasizes tropical rainforest restoration and management and connections with the Great Barrier Reef. Rainforest ecosystems are hot spots of floral and faunal biodiversity. Large areas of North Eastern Queensland were once covered with rainforests. However, agricultural and residential development have destroyed and disrupted rainforest habitats and species impacting not only the forests but downstream on the coast and Reef.

The Centre's research direction and coursework focuses on:
1. Regional land use and landscape scale management
2. Tropical rainforest fragmentation, restoration, and management
3. Opportunities and constraints in tropical rainforest restoration projects
4. Population assessment of vertebrate species
5. Climate change impacts
6. Eco-cultural tourism

Discussions will also include other regionally important issues such as tourism, the role of tree planting groups in restoration, watershed management, and management of the Great Barrier Reef.

Program Schedule
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. The schedule is rigorous and fast-paced, but, due to the somewhat unpredictable nature of fieldwork, changes to the schedule frequently occur – so flexibility is key!
One day a week is reserved for studying, exploring the local area, and relaxing (Typically Sunday). After the first few days of orientation, the first 2/3 of the program will include between 22 and 38 hours of contact field work or lectures each week.

Toward the latter 1/3 of the program, blocks of time are allocated for the Directed Research projects. Groups of 6-10 students generally go to a research site with a staff member to collect data. Additional meetings are scheduled to offer training sessions in the skills needed to complete the research. These include sessions on data collection methods, statistics, paper writing formats, computer spreadsheets, word processing, laboratory analysis sessions and seminar presentations.

The day-to-day schedule varies and can include classroom lectures, field lectures, or a combination of the two. Occasionally there are long classroom days or (more frequently) full days in the field. Some days, field work can start as early as 5:00am or last through the night, depending on the topic of research. In short, there is no typical day at CRS, but here is a sample schedule, to give you an idea.

Sample Day 1

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

Sample Day 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>End Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0700</td>
<td>0800</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0800</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Rotational groups: TREAT, Landcare, site maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1430</td>
<td>Center Cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1430</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>Free time in Atherton or Yungaburra for shopping, internet cafés, or sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Day 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>End Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0730</td>
<td>0830</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0830</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Field work or write-up and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>Announcements + Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>Field work or write-up and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Note on SFS Structure and Self-Care

SFS programs are highly structured and we encourage you to reflect on how the SFS program will differ from your daily life on your home campus. The 6-day per week academic model is distinct from a typical college campus, and allows time for fieldwork, travel, and cultural and community activities. SFS program policies additionally make the daily student experience on an SFS program different from most home campuses. The SFS program model and policies are part of what makes the SFS experience unique and are designed to help keep students safe, healthy, and create an environment where students can have a positive experience abroad. It’s important to consider how you will adjust to this shift in routine, especially as it relates to your ability to manage self-care while abroad. You can review “Self-Care and Wellbeing” later in this document for a further reflection on managing self-care while on an SFS program.

It’s important to understand that the structure and policies of SFS programs are designed to facilitate student, staff, and local community member safety and well-being, create an environment where students can have a positive experience abroad, and help students manage the rigors of SFS programs. Taking the time to fully consider and understand SFS structure and policies, as well as the reasoning behind it will help you to have a positive experience abroad and promote a healthy and productive environment for all those around you. Please review SFS Policies and Procedures to read through the SFS program policies, behavioral expectations, and information about disciplinary action when these expectations and policies are not upheld.

We encourage you to discuss any questions or concerns about the structure of your program with your SFS Admissions Counselor or SFS Safety and Student Life.

RAP (Reflection, Announcements, Physicality)

RAP is the kickoff meeting each morning for all students, staff, and faculty. It is run by the Student of the Day (all students will rotate this responsibility). The Student of the Day will prepare and facilitate a reflection and physical activity to bring the group together and get energized for the day. (Bring your favorite ice breaker game ideas!) During RAP, the group will review the day's schedule, give updates, and everyone will have a chance to share announcements and ask questions.

Community

One of the ways SFS is different from many traditional study abroad options is that our programs do not follow the traditional model of cultural and language immersion.

Think about how you will experience local culture on this program. On an SFS program, you will live at a field station with your team, rather than in a homestay, local apartment, or university dorm. You and your cohort will spend much of your time together – living, working, and studying as a group. This means that you will not necessarily be eating local cuisine or navigating the local culture every day. However, we fundamentally believe that meaningful environmental research is only possible with the input of local people and in consideration of cultural history. We develop our research plans in collaboration with our community partners and stakeholders, but we do not consider it our role to make decisions on their behalf or to impose our ideas. An important part of every SFS program is to explore environmental issues within the context of the community and ecosystems we call home.

On this program you will interact with the community both informally and as part of the academic program. You will work regularly with volunteers of local tree-planting organizations in all phases of reforestation including seed collection, germination and seedling care and replanting. Near the end of the semester, you may have the opportunity to present the findings of your research to local residents, including farmers, regional planners, and scientists. We will always take the lead from our community, so activities may vary term to term to reflect the needs and requests of our partners.

Center Hours

Due to the residential nature of SFS programs, there is a curfew set for when students are required to return to campus. We will present specific information regarding Center closing hours during Orientation at the beginning of our program.

Special Religious Requirements

If you have questions regarding a religious holiday which falls during program time, please contact your Admissions Counselor immediately upon acceptance. Schedules often involve complex coordination with many parties and reservations are often made months in advance.
Program Breaks
Dates for the breaks below are typically available 1-2 weeks prior to the start of the program and will be sent to students by email as soon as they are available. Students will make plans for activities and accommodations during program breaks together after arrival. Please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor with any questions or concerns about program breaks.

Cairns Weekends
There are 2 full weekends (2 days in duration) when students will have a full Saturday-Sunday off. Students will have transportation into Cairns and will be picked up at the end of the weekend to return to the center.

Mid-Semester Break
The program includes a five-day break during which time the Center is closed, and students are expected to travel on their own. This is a wonderful opportunity (and the only one during the program!) to do some independent travel in the region.

Mid-Semester Break and Weekends Away are characterized as “Non-Program Time.” You can read more about what this entails in SFS Policies and Procedures.
LIFE AT THE CENTER

Setting
CRS is secluded. The nearest town is Yungaburra (population 1000), a 20-minute drive by car. This small town offers a doctor, pharmacy, library, hotel, restaurants, post office, and a supermarket. Atherton, a slightly larger (population around 8000) town about 40 minutes away by car, is also nearby and has grocery stores, hairdressers, a pharmacy, etc. No town is accessible by walking, so it is important to expect to be a bit more isolated from the “outside world” that you’re used to – be ready to embrace rainforest living with your team!

Cairns – (pop. approx. 130,000) is 90 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.

Weather and Climate
The Atherton Tablelands, at 17 degrees south latitude (comparable to Managua, Nicaragua).

The region has two major seasons: a "wet" season, lasting from approximately November through April (the Australian summer), and a "dry" season from May to October (Australian winter and spring).

**Fall Semester students** should be prepared for mostly dry season conditions at the center including some cool mornings and evenings as well as some rain. Daytime temperatures can get down to 50°F (10°C). Later in the semester, hot humid weather and thunderstorms can occur.

**Spring Semester students** should be prepared for mostly wet season conditions at the center. 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. Spring students should be prepared for the possibility of early cool 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.

Remember that this is the rainforest, so both Spring and Fall students should be prepared for some rainy weather!

Community Living
On an SFS program you are part of a team, living and working with a small community of your fellow students and staff.

This isn’t just having a roommate or a classmate. This experience is intensive and involves many hours spent together in close quarters and out in the elements. In addition to the communal living arrangements, a lot of the academic work is collaborative or group work. This experience will require patience, open-mindedness, resiliency, and cooperation. The benefit of this cohort model is that you will have a community to support you when the going gets tough and laugh with you along the way. Center life will be both rewarding and challenging and will require you to take responsibility for being an active participant at the center and a supportive team member to your peers.

Chores
The center relies on a group living model, where everyone on campus does their part. Students and staff alike are expected to do their own dishes and to engage in keeping our home beautiful. Specific chore responsibilities and schedules will be shared with students during orientation but include meal cleanup and composting and general cleaning duties.
The Field Station

The 153-acre Centre property in northern Queensland is about 99% forested, some of this in restoration plantings done by SFS students. About 1% of the property is buildings and open space. Several thousand acres of National Park, which have received designation as a World Heritage Area, border the property on one side. The Centre is located in the foothills (elevation of 2624 feet, or 800 meters) of the Gillies range on the eastern edge of the Atherton Tablelands.

The Centre’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 study space and computer room with four laptops for student research use, offices for Centre staff, the main kitchen, and the covered outdoor dining facilities.

Housing
Surrounded by forest are four eight-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 storage cubbies at the main building. The cabins are a short walking distance away from the restroom blocks with shower and toilet facilities.

Laundry
In the main center building, there are two washing machines for student use (the Centre 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 if the weather permits it!

Other Facilities
The “Lounge” is a 5-minute walk from cabins and a 7-minute walk from the main building and has a TV for watching movies, couches, 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.
Food and Cuisine
All food for meals is purchased locally, prepared by the Centre and served buffet-style. The Centre employs a cook for the evening meal, Monday through Friday; at other times food is prepared by staff and students.

At the center, we are lucky to have access to a variety of meat, fish, dairy products, fruits, and vegetables. You can generally expect breakfasts of cereals, yoghurt, fruit, eggs, and toast; lunches of sandwiches (peanut butter & jelly, cold meat, hummus), cheese, salads, and leftovers; and hot suppers of vegetarian and meat dishes.

Specialty Diets
SFS can accommodate most dietary needs and preferences, but students will find that the variety of food may be limited due to local availability, cultural practice, and cost. Additionally, when away from the Center, options may be further limited. For example, specialty food products high in protein, such as tofu, quinoa, dark leafy greens, and raw fruits and vegetables may not be readily available on campus. Rice and cooked vegetables comprise many alternative meals for students with specialty diets. Therefore, SFS recommends bringing snacks (i.e. protein powder, protein bars, nut butters, trail mix, etc.) to supplement dietary variety.

For students with a medically necessary dietary requirement, please refer to the “Medical Preparation for the Field” section of this guide.

Exercise and Recreation
If you are in the habit of regular exercise and plan to continue during your time with SFS, there are options at the center. Remember that you will be living away from state-of-the-art fitness facilities and should prepare to be creative! There is some gently used weight-lifting and other gym equipment in the main center building, some trails for walking, running, and hiking, and a grass volleyball court as well. Previous students have brought yoga mats and resistance bands as well as shared favorite group exercise activities as well (think Zumba)!
TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Computers
Students need to bring their own laptops with them for use during the program. A tablet alone is not sufficient, and Chromebooks or devices that rely on Internet connectivity are not recommended. Your laptop should contain Microsoft Office or have the ability to export and receive documents that are compatible with Microsoft Office. Your laptop also must have a USB port. Please confirm that your laptop can accept 240v power, and you will need a standard Australian 3-prong power adapter to connect to the Centre’s power outlets.

Computer Care
Due to the varying weather conditions at our field stations, electronic devices are subjected to a much harsher environment than they normally operate in. Back up your data regularly onto a USB or external hard drive in the event your computer fails during your program. Internet is not always available, so do not plan to rely on the cloud for storage!

Please be aware that the heat and humidity can be very hard on electronics and can cause serious damage to your devices. In particular, Apple products do not fare well in high humidity and are more difficult to repair or replace locally. PCs are more common in this region and local electronic repair centers are better equipped to handle PC repairs.

Given the conditions, students should take some precautions to give themselves the best chance of success. Here are some examples:

• Bring a waterproof or water-resistant case or a re-sealable bag for all devices (especially touch screens).
• Use moisture absorbing material in your case any time your laptop is not in use. (Rice is a good option and available locally!)
• Consider bringing a cooling mat, a laptop fan, and a spare battery and charger.
• Pay attention to your device function: if it's working hard, give it a rest!
• Avoid exposing your device to direct sunlight, precipitation, dust, or other harmful elements (like sunscreen!)
• Consider purchasing personal insurance for your valuable devices.

SFS has a couple dedicated student computers which are used primarily for sharing group data, documents, etc. In the case of a personal computer failure, these computers can be used by students for their work but must remain as a shared resource. Do not plan to use an SFS computer as your laptop for the semester – it is required to bring a personal laptop.

Electrical Appliances
The electrical voltage in Australia is 240. Many electronics, including most computers, can handle 240 and simply need an adapter to go from an American plug to an Australian-shaped one. Ones that cannot 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 home.

Example of Australian plug:

Internet
Wireless internet is available at the Center. Students are permitted to use the internet for academic and personal use in accordance with the internet policies outlined in the SFS Policies and Procedures. The internet has limited bandwidth and is shared amongst students and staff.

Part of living at a field station entails working with limited resources, including the Internet. You should expect internet connection to be slow and intermittent, so you should not expect to use the Internet in the same way you do at home. There may be times during the semester when you do not have access to the Internet. Limited access requires a good deal of patience, and you should get ready to unplug!

Things to think about:
• Set up WhatsApp and/or other messaging apps before you leave for your program
• Download offline playlists, as you won’t be able to stream music from Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, YouTube, etc.
• Bring an external hard drive with your favorite movies and shows, as you won’t have access to streaming platforms like Netflix, Hulu, etc.
• Set communication expectations with your family and friends at home – your schedule and access to internet will change often.

Communication with Home

Messaging Apps
The most convenient and affordable way to communicate with your family and friends at home is via Wi-Fi-based messaging such as WhatsApp, iMessage, GroupMe, Facebook Messenger, and email.

Students are welcome to bring their personal smartphones to use on the Wi-Fi at the center. Please remember that many apps require a text or call verification code during the setup process, so we recommend that you install and set up any apps you intend to use prior to departure.

Remember that access to video chat will not be possible at the center!

Phones
The Centre 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 with rates of AUS 5-10 cents/minute (plus AUS 25 cent connection fee). 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.

Mail

Letters and Postcards: You will be able to receive mail to the center address. All 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, while it takes 14-16 weeks for surface. Given delivery time, it’s important that your friends and family do not send any mail during the last three weeks of the program, as you will likely not receive it!

AIRMAIL letters should be sent to:

Student Name
SFS Centre for Rainforest Studies
P.O. Box 141 Yungaburra
Queensland, 4884
AUSTRALIA

Packages: SFS does not recommend mailing packages to the centre as it can be costly and pick-up logistics can be very complicated. As such, please plan to bring all necessary items with you. If you have prescription medicines or medical equipment, make sure to bring enough for the entire session, as it is not legal or possible to receive these via mail.

Shipping at the end of the 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.
HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS IN THE FIELD

SFS Staff and Student Affairs Manager
Due to the remote location of many SFS field stations, several SFS field staff are certified in Wilderness First Aid (WFA) and trained on how to respond in the case of an emergency. In addition, each SFS program is staffed with a full-time residential Student Affairs Manager (SAM) who is the primary medical responder and student support personnel on campus. The SAM is certified as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) and in Mental Health First Aid; they also receive training in sexual assault first response. In addition to their role as a medical responder, the SAM also coordinates program logistics, engages students in community outreach, advises and counsels students on group dynamics and adjusting to life abroad, and conducts in-country risk assessment and management.

Orientation
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. The goal of orientation is to:

- Familiarize students with SFS-wide and campus-specific policies and procedures
- Introduce students to potential risks and hazards inherent in the program and its location
- Introduce students to potential risks and cultural norms of the local community
- Build foundations for good group dynamics and a functional student community
- Introduce a sustainability contract
- Help students understand their role in conservation and community relations on campus
- Foster self-awareness

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 resources may be helpful to you in this research:

- Bureau of Consular Affairs: www.travel.state.gov
- U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/
- Diversity Abroad: https://www.diversitynetwork.org/page/publications

24-Hour Emergency Hotline
SFS maintains a 24-hour emergency hotline while students are abroad, and during their travels to the program. If a parent or guardian needs to urgently contact a student in the field, an emergency call can be made to this emergency hotline at 978.219.5113. When prompted, leave a message including your name and phone number. You can expect to receive a call back from the SFS Safety and Student Life Department within one hour. For non-emergency inquiries while a student is in the field, please e-mail safety@fieldstudies.org.

Medical Care on Program
SFS maintains a detailed Risk Assessment and Management Plan for each Center, which outlines country risks and response protocols, including local, national, and international medical facilities and their treatment capabilities. These plans ensure that SFS staff are always aware of the closest and most capable medical facility in their current vicinity and the protocols outline the best route for medical care access. If a student requires medical attention during a program, the Student Affairs Manager (SAM) on campus will assess the illness or injury and determine next steps (i.e. first aid, monitoring, medical attention, etc.). If a visit to a medical care facility is needed, an SFS staff member will assist in facilitating care and accompany the student to the appointment. Please be aware that there may be times when access to medical care may be delayed or unavailable, such as during travel or on expedition.

Students are responsible for all incidental expenses, including medical costs, transportation, accommodations, etc., incurred by all parties involved. Some medical emergencies or conditions, including injuries and illnesses that cannot be supported in the field, may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS.
Mental Health Support
SFS is partnered with Morneau Shepell to provide students with My Student Support Program (My SSP). This program provides 24/7 mental health and wellness support in the form of chat, phone, and video that connect students with Student Support Advisors. It also provides wellness tips and reminders that can be a helpful source of support while adjusting to new routines, roles, and responsibilities while abroad. The resource is accessible via the My SSP App, which can be downloaded for free in the App store or by visiting the My SSP website, https://us.myissp.com/Home/UniversitySearch. Students will have a full introduction to the resource during their in-country program orientation but are encouraged to download and explore the App or website prior to departure. It is helpful to complete the APP profile before departure and accept the push notifications.

This resource can be used for both immediate and ongoing consultations during a student’s time abroad. However, MySSP is meant to be a supplemental resource during the program. Students should work with the SFS Safety and Student Life Department and their home mental health provider to make a support plan to manage mental health while abroad.

Sexual Health and Wellness
When it comes to sexual health and wellness or relationships during your SFS program, please consider:

- The ramifications that a short-term relationship may have on a small residential campus or within the local community. These relationships can have long-term effects on local communities that can last beyond your time abroad.
- The current dialogue about and understanding of consent in the U.S. often does not apply in other cultures.
- If you decide to engage in sexual interactions during your program, use protection (e.g. condoms/dental dams).
- Prophylactic sexually transmitted infection (STI) medication and emergency contraception may not be available in the remote locations in which we operate.
- Students who feel subjected to sexual harassment should walk away from any situation that makes them uncomfortable without concern for being culturally inappropriate. Students should report harassment or assault to any SFS staff member or HQ representative with whom they feel comfortable.
- In the case of a sexual assault, SFS will make every effort to support a student. This includes access to medical care, the option to report to the local law enforcement, and identifying support systems and additional resources. Local laws, definitions, and legal implications often differ from those in the US. Different laws and limited availability of resources such as rape kits can be complicating factors in responding to a report of sexual harassment or sexual assault in foreign countries.

Self-Care and Wellbeing
Study abroad can be an exciting time for personal reflection and growth. However, the adjustment to new routines, relationships, and cultural environments, while away from your usual support systems, can be challenging especially if you do not take time for self-care. Self-care is an essential tool for maintaining good mental, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing during your time abroad. As you prepare for your SFS program, take time to consider how you might react to challenges that you encounter. Do you have self-care practices that you use at home during times of stress or transition? For example, do you journal? Create art? Exercise? Go for a long drive in the car? The ways you manage stress, take care of yourself, or find joy are your coping mechanisms. Consider that some of these outlets may not be available to you while you are abroad on an SFS program. For example:

- **Communication with support systems.** Limited internet connectivity, unexpected power outages, and busy academic and travel schedules can reduce the frequency and ease with which you are able to contact family, friends, pets, mentors, counselors, etc. If you currently talk to a mental health provider, and plan to stay in touch while abroad, this limited connectivity can pose a challenge. Similarly, talk to your family and friends to figure out the best communication plan (i.e. WhatsApp, calling card, etc.) and remember that you may not be able to be in touch as frequently as you are on your home campus
- **Social media.** Limited internet bandwidth can make it difficult to engage with others through pictures and videos over social media platforms. Upload speeds are significantly slower and, at times, not possible. This can be a source of stress for students who are used to constant connections, and can cause frustration, irritability, sadness, and anxiety. What other ways can you communicate with others about your study abroad experience? For example, setting an expectation with friends and family that you will update a blog might reduce a feeling of stress to provide social media updates in real time.
• **Privacy and time alone.** On campus, it may not be possible to find a private spot to rest and recharge daily. On a residential campus, there will be a lot of interaction with your peer group (i.e. sharing meals, attending classes, studying, recreational time, etc.). Think of ways that you can create some space for yourself when you are unable to physically distance yourself from others. Perhaps using headphones or stringing up a hammock can provide similar space.

• **Off-campus transportation.** Access to transportation may be limited and you will not be permitted to operate vehicles (including cars, motorboats, motorcycles, etc.) at any time while on program. Think about how this limited mobility might impact coping mechanisms that you use at home, such as taking yourself for a long drive.

• **Solo runs or hikes.** While the locations of most SFS campuses allow for regular exercise, it may look different from your normal routines at home. For example, SFS campuses do not have athletic facilities or equipment such as treadmills or weights. You will be required to use the buddy system when exercising off campus. (For more information about the SFS Off-Campus Policies in SFS Policies and Procedures). While away from the SFS center, it may not be feasible to find time or space for recreational exercise. Students are encouraged to bring compact workout equipment, such as resistance bands, for use during the program. Bringing downloaded exercise videos (i.e. yoga, Pilates, etc.), using apps that can be accessed offline, coaching one another through favorite workouts or playing a pick-up game of soccer or frisbee can be creative and fun ways to stay active.

When you do not engage in self-care during times of stress, you may be more apt to turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, which can include risk-taking behaviors such as increased alcohol consumption, inappropriate or unhealthy relationships, rule-breaking, or resistance to structure.

This phenomenon is articulated by psychologist Dr. William Glasser as “Choice Theory.” “Choice Theory” holds that behavior is driven by an attempt to fulfill five basic needs: security, love, power, freedom, and fun. If one or more of these behaviors is not being met, then you may be more likely to act out in other aspects of life. For example, if you feel “power” is not met due to a lack of autonomy in a new, unfamiliar environment, you may seek to increase levels of “fun” by drinking to excess when you may otherwise not. It is important to understand that these types of behaviors can have more serious repercussions while abroad, due to unfamiliarity with the local culture, environment, and local laws and customs. Risky student behavior can put you and others in dangerous or unsafe situations disrupt the ability of staff and students to perform research. and/or have adverse impacts on the local community.

**Managing Social Drinking**

If drinking alcohol is part of how you socialize with friends, this will remain an option to you during your time abroad at local restaurants and bars in your free time. According to the SFS Alcohol Policy, SFS maintains dry campuses, and alcohol consumption is not permitted at the field station. More information about this policy can be found in SFS Policies and Procedures.

If you do choose to consume alcohol, we ask that you do so in moderation. Situational awareness and understanding of local cultures are important factors in reducing risk in certain situations. In some cultures, alcohol abuse is a systemic problem in the community. Therefore, over-indulgence of alcohol by SFS students can be viewed negatively by the community. It is always important to demonstrate respect and gratitude towards the local community by maintaining respectful behavior.

Excessive consumption of alcohol can reduce your vigilance, lessen your awareness or response to cultural nuances or faux pas, and possibly lead to black outs, injury, assault, abuse, reckless behavior, and impaired judgement and decision making. To mitigate these risks, it is important to consume alcohol in moderation, pay attention to how much you consume, hydrate, make sure you do not drink on an empty stomach, keep an eye on your drink at all times, do not accept drinks that you did not see being opened or prepared in front of you, maintain a buddy system, and practice bystander intervention.

This topic will be covered more in SFS Orientation during the first week of the program. Students who anticipate challenges managing alcohol consumption abroad should discuss with the SFS Safety and Student Life department prior to departure and can continue to seek support from their Student Affairs Manager (SAM) during their program.
PACKING GUIDE
PACKING TIPS

How to Read the Packing List
You will see two sections of the packing list. The first section includes required items that are necessary for the program. The second section is comprised of suggestions and recommendations from previous students and staff in the field. Remember that everyone’s needs and preferences are different, so some of these items may not be essential for you!

Luggage
SFS does not have a specific policy regarding how much luggage students should bring for their program and does not have a preference regarding wheeled or non-wheeled luggage. Alumni recommend using packing cubes to save space and keep your belongings organized. Remember that you’ll need to navigate one or more airports with your luggage, so make sure you bring only what you can maneuver yourself!

Wear and Tear
Make sure all equipment is in good shape before leaving home: 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 customs in Australia.

The rainforest is hard on clothes and your belongings will very likely 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!

Culture and Clothing
Modesty while experiencing another culture is always wise and culturally sensitive, however around the field station itself you do not need to be as modest as you do when you interact with the wider community. A minimum of 3-inch seam is required of all shorts worn in town. More conservative dress is required when visiting local schools, churches, and government buildings. Shoulders must be covered when working in the kitchen in accordance with health code regulations.

Consider your impact!
As you pack, please consider the impact of the products that you bring with you to your program. Think about both the ingredients and packaging of what you bring. Plastic waste, for example, is incredibly detrimental to the ecosystem and waste management in remote locations is quite difficult. Consider replacing bottled products with products that come in bars or jars, such as shampoo and deodorant.

We highly encourage biodegradable soaps, shampoos, and conditioner. Conventional soaps and shampoos can have a significant impact on the environment. As you consider biodegradable options, remember that not all soaps and shampoos labeled "natural" are biodegradable. Brands that are typically biodegradable include Jason’s Natural, California Baby, Kiss My Face, Nature Gate-Rainwater, Dr. Bronner’s, Tom’s of Maine, Desert Essence and some Aveda and Garnier products.

To keep your single-use plastic/paper consumption to a minimum, think about bringing a reusable shopping tote, metal straw, cloth napkins and other items.

A note about insects and dark/blue clothing: 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.

The following packing list does not suggest amounts, so pack according to your own needs!
PACKING LIST: REQUIRED ITEMS

Clothing
- **Shorts**: nice shorts are acceptable town wear.
- **Athletic shorts**: runners may want to bring a few pairs
- **T-shirts**: synthetic, quick-dry athletic fabrics are best
- **Pants**: lightweight blends that dry quickly are best – bring at least 2 pairs that will be for fieldwork and at least 1 pair for evenings at the center
- **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** or denim shorts (not recommended for January-July. They do not dry easily!)
- **Swimsuit**
- **Sun-smart rash guard**
- **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
- **A few casual 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 Cairns weekends and mid-semester break will give you opportunities to wear your civvies.

Footwear
- **Gumboots** (Wellies/rubber boots) 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) Snakes are present and active at night, so you will be required to wear closed-toe shoes after dark while moving about the Centre.
- **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! Please note that these will only be acceptable footwear during the day.

Gear
- **Hat** – for sun and rain protection
- **Wool or fleece hat** (April - August)
- **Sunglasses**
- **Sturdy work gloves** for weeding, heavy duty gloves are best!
- **Wristwatch** - preferably water-resistant or waterproof!
- **Headlamp** with several packs of batteries. You will use your headlamp every evening to walk back to your cabin from the Centre (5-10 minute walk). The trails between buildings are not lit and it is dark under the rainforest canopy! A flashlight should 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.
- **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 always be carried with you for snakebite treatment or sprains.
- **Two water bottles** – 1-liter capacity each. Alumni recommend insulated bottles!
- **Tupperware/Rubbermaid container** - one for packing lunches
- **Ziplock bags or re-useable waterproof bags** - Bring a few small and a few gallon-sized for personal items.
Personal Items and Toiletries

- **Biodegradable Toiletries** - Not all soaps and shampoos labeled "natural" are biodegradable! Some brands that carry biodegradable options include Jason’s Natural, Kiss My Face, Nature Gate-Rainwater, Dr. Bronner’s, Tom’s of Maine, Desert Essence, and some Aveda and Garnier products. If you wish to wait until you arrive, some items can be purchased from the nearest town, but you should plan to bring enough with you for at least the first couple weeks.

- **Personal First-Aid Kit** - with plenty of anti-itch creams, Neosporin, Bacitracin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, Band-Aids, tape, tweezers, antihistamines, etc. You will find this to be useful.

- 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, antihistamines, etc.

- **If you experience motion sickness:** The highway to the Centre is VERY windy, long, and can make people nauseous!! (Gillies Highway) As well, you will find yourself in the SFS vans for long amounts of time and during trips to the Great Barrier Reef we will be on boats—**please bring some Dramamine**! We also recommend Ginger chews, peppermint chews, and motion bands!

For the Cabin

- One set of sheets and a pillowcase (Standard twin size). A pillow is provided.
- Sleeping bag, synthetic fill (down is much harder to keep dry/ mold-free), lightweight/higher temperature rated.
- Reliable alarm clock of some kind
- Towels (2 large towels and 1 face or hand towel) please bring only quick dry towels! These take up less space and will be much better suited for the humidity!

For the Field and Classroom

- Flash Drives/ USB memory sticks and/or external hard drive. At least 2 GB recommended, to take your work and photos home with you at the end of the program, and/or to back up your computer.
- Notebooks 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.
- Computer: Students are **required** to bring their own personal laptops (contact your SFS Admissions Counselor if this will not be possible for you). Refer to the “Technology and Communications” section to review laptop requirements.
- Protective case for your computer
- Surge protector

**PACKING LIST: ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED ITEMS**

- Power adapter if needed for electronics
- **Waterproof cases for your electronics**, along with silicone packets (or some water-absorbing equivalent)
- **Drybag**: Drybag backpacks are great for wet environments! You might also consider several smaller drybags for personal items. If you don’t plan to bring a drybag, a **water-proof daypack cover** for rainy days in the field.
- **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). Optional for those interested in plants.
- Headphones and/or **Bluetooth speaker** for listening to music
- **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
- Games to play during free time on rainy days at the Centre
- Laundry bag
• **Earplugs and eye mask**: Living in one room with up to 7 other people can interrupt your sleeping patterns, especially if they have different routines to yours. Earplugs and a mask may help you fall asleep and stay asleep despite other activity within the room.

• **Personal tent and camping equipment**: if you are interested in camping over the mid-semester break or after the program. Students may not borrow SFS tents or equipment during these times. If you bring your own, make sure there is no dirt or plant matter on it, or you may be delayed at quarantine.

• **Small Repair Kit**: needle, thread, safety pins, etc.

• **Sleeping pad for camping a few nights** – you will only use this for 2-3 nights during the program

• **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, waterproof binoculars.

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**A NOTE ON FAA AND TSA REQUIREMENTS**

When packing, please make sure to check Federal Aviation Association (FAA) and Transport Security Administration (TSA) for the latest prohibited items, which may include electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, medical marijuana, or cannabis-infused products, such as Cannabidiol (CBD) oil. You can find this information at [https://www.faa.gov/](https://www.faa.gov/).

**Electronic Cigarettes and Vaping Devices**
The FAA prohibits these devices in checked bags. Battery-powered E-cigarettes, vaporizers, vape pens, atomizers, and electronic nicotine delivery systems may only be carried in the aircraft cabin (in carry-on baggage or on your person).

Over forty countries have banned or have some restrictions on the use, sales, or importation of vaping devices, including SFS host countries of Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Chile, and Panama. It is therefore critical to check your host-country laws before possessing, purchasing, or using electronic cigarettes or vaping devices while in country. Keep in mind that some countries do not have written law or policy regarding vaping devices but may target individuals using these products based on lack of recognition of their use and purpose.

**Medical Marijuana**
Possession of marijuana and cannabis-infused products, including some Cannabidiol (CBD) oils, is currently illegal under federal law. Federal authorities do not recognize medical marijuana laws or cards from U.S. states where it is legal, so travelers with any amount of medical marijuana can be arrested and detained in U.S. airports. Similarly, marijuana is illegal in most countries. Students with a U.S. state-issued medical prescription cab be arrested, prosecuted, and deported if in possession of any illegal substance, including marijuana and cannabis-infused products. Students should note that products containing or made from hemp with overt labeling may not be permitted on international flights, and host-country laws may vary in the way they are interpreted and enforced by local authorities. Alternatively, travel with clothing, jewelry, and bags made of hemp material is acceptable.

SFS does not allow possession of any drugs or medications that are illegal, as defined by U.S. federal and host-country laws. **The SFS Drug Policy prohibits possession or use of marijuana for the full duration of the SFS program, including free time and weekends away.**
We can’t wait to meet you and look forward to having you join us in the field!

Stay engaged with SFS while you prepare for your program:

- Keep up with the SFS News from the Field blog
- Follow us on Instagram: @thesfs / @thesfs_australia

Didn’t find what you were looking for? Check the following resources for more information:

- **Financial Planner for your program**: all program costs, including expected out-of-pocket costs, information about currency, and money exchange
- **Academic Handbook for your program**: information about the environmental issues of the region, SFS’s approach to grading and assessment, transcripts, academic policies, using research data for a thesis
- **Travel Guide for your program**: specific information about booking flights, visas, arrival to the program. Emailed to enrolled students 3-4 months before the program.
- **SFS Policies and Procedures Manual**: behavioral, administrative, medical, operational, and financial policies
And if you’re looking to pass the time, try your hand at this SFS-themed crossword!

**Life in the Field**

***Across***
1. porch or tree hangout spot
2. puts the S in STEM
3. variety of life
4. stamped and signed from far away
5. neighbors, partners - the people you’ll meet
6. pl. might cause an itch
7. large scale impact studied at every center
8. rain or waves won’t stop me
9. solution for mid-afternoon grumbles
10. can’t leave home without it
11. in the lab or in the field
12. substitute for night vision
13. solar consequences
14. carries all the things you’ll need in the field
15. abbr. daily meeting
16. meal staple
17. lasts , balanced, a goal for our future

***Down***
1. large scale impact studied at every center
2. puts the S in STEM
3. variety of life
4. stamped and signed from far away
5. neighbors, partners - the people you’ll meet
6. pl. might cause an itch
7. in the lab or in the field
8. substitute for night vision
9. solar consequences
10. can’t leave home without it
11. solution for mid-afternoon grumbles
12. meal staple
13. lasts , balanced, a goal for our future
14. in the lab or in the field
15. abbr. daily meeting
16. substitute for night vision
17. meal staple

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