Introduction/Background

There may be numerous reasons why a student may decide not to participate in a study abroad experience – but disability should not be one of them! With advance planning and the building of multi-layered partnerships between staff in disability services, study abroad programs, overseas and domestic partners, disability advocacy groups, and state vocational rehabilitation agencies – students with a broad variety of disabilities can have successful study abroad experiences. With the understanding that environment shapes disability – and disability shapes environment – creating accessible and inclusive programs through universal design broadens and deepens the study abroad experience for all participants – both disabled and nondisabled.

The experience of disability – like the study abroad experience – teaches us to learn to accommodate and adapt to changing needs, changing environments and changing realities. Similarly, disability services and study abroad staff share common goals in empowering (vs. rescuing) our students to be independent self-advocates who can be successful in whatever choices they may make in both curricular and extracurricular, and on and off-campus experiences.

Top 12 questions for study abroaders with disabilities

1. Do you have a disability services (DS) contact for your study abroad program (SAP) – and have you shared this info with both ODS and Dean Gretchen Young?

2. Have you reviewed the diversity/identity links (LGBT, multicultural, disabilities, special dietary needs) on the Barnard study abroad website?

3. Have you scheduled a check-in appointment with your ODS disability adviser (Susan Q or Okie) re: any disability-related accommodations needed in your SAP?

4. Have you obtained a copy of the ODS Study Abroad/Summer School Accommodations Template to share with your SAP?

5. If you have a chronic illness (medical or psychiatric) – have you checked in with your current clinician and/or with the Barnard Primary Care Health Service and the Furman Counseling Center?

6. If you are currently taking medication – or anticipate the possibility of using meds while in your SAP – have you researched current guidelines re: traveling with medication? Note: www.miusa.org has an excellent 16-item tip sheet, “What to consider when traveling internationally with medications”.

7. Have you located local clinician referrals in the event of a flare-up or other disability-related needs?

8. If you use any disability-related aids or equipment (e.g. ASL interpreters, FM assistive listening devices, strobe alarms, orientation and mobility (O+M) training, assistive technology, etc.) – do you have local referrals?

9. Have you been in touch with Alumnae Affairs (via ODS) to locate any local Barnard alums or clubs near your SAP?

10. If you have specific disability-related travel needs, have you been in touch with airline disability services personnel and/or ground travel reps?

11. Have you communicated your housing needs for the coming academic year with a designated proxy/friend? Will you be completing a Disability Housing Request? Do you anticipate any disability housing/dining needs during your SAP?

12. Would you like to meet with a Study Abroad E-mentor (for those considering study abroad) – or be a Study Abroad E-mentor (for those who have completed a study abroad experience)?
Resources

Mobility International USA (MIUSA)
www.miusa.org
Mobility International USA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that was co-founded in 1981 by Susan Sygall and Barbara Williams. MIUSA is a cross-disability organization serving those with cognitive, hearing, learning, mental health, physical, systemic, vision and other disabilities. MIUSA's mission is to empower people with disabilities to achieve their human rights through international exchange and international development.

National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE)
www.miusa.org/ncde
NCDE is a comprehensive one-stop resource on advising and tools for people with disabilities, professionals, educational institutions and organizations on increasing disability inclusion in international study, volunteer, teaching and other exchange programs.

Access Abroad: a collaborative effort at the University of Minnesota between the Learning Abroad Center and Disability Services
www.umabroad.edu/students/identity/disabilities
To facilitate equal access for students seeking to pursue an education abroad experience and to provide info on accessibility at sponsored overseas sites.

Office of Disability Services
Barnard College
Columbia University
3009 Broadway
105 Hewitt
New York, NY 10027
212/854-4634 (voice/TTY)
212/854-7491 (fax)
ods@barnard.edu (email)
www.barnard.edu/ods (web)

Study Abroad and Disability

Barnard Study Abroad
Office of International Programs
Barnard College
Columbia University
3009 Broadway
10 Milbank
New York, NY 10027
212/854-1777 (voice)
212/854-6947 (fax)
studyabroad@barnard.edu (email)
www.barnard.edu/global/study-abroad (web)

Office of Disability Services
Barnard College