

Navigating Accessibility & Disability Issues Abroad  
*A Guide by Holistic Learning Alumni Fellow, Sasha Conley  
for The Hampshire College Global Education Office*

\*Note: Directly asking a program some of these questions prior to your acceptance/admission may indicate to them that you have a disability. Disability disclosure is a personal choice. If you wish to keep your disability status private while abroad or until you are accepted, find a way to ask these questions anonymously or look for answers to your questions online. [Abroad with Disabilities has a great list of resources.](#)

### **To Consider Pre-Departure**

#### *Getting Around*

- o What does a typical day in the program look like?
- o What is the common transportation method from one activity to another? Getting to and from your home? If walking, how much walking in a typical day?
- o How wheelchair-accessible is the location? How common are wheelchair accessible bathrooms? Curb cuts? Squat toilets?

#### *Care*

- o What is physical and mental health care like in that country for a visitor or temporary resident?
- o How accessible are pharmaceuticals?

#### *Climate*

- o How does that culture view people with disabilities/mental health?
- o What is the weather like? Are you affected by rain or heat? Is slipping in snow particularly dangerous for you?

### **While In-Country**

Communication can critically improve your ability to participate in program activities. Checking in with program staff can be especially beneficial during these times:

- At the beginning of the program
- Right before starting a large project
- When you're in the middle of a project
- While wrapping up a project
- When deadlines/assignments are piling up (whether due to late work, extended deadlines or a rigorous program)
- Before leaving for a new excursion location (on a multi-location program or during a day trip) preferably a few days in advance to allow follow up questions to arise and to mentally prepare.

And on these topics, since acquiring information in advance can help reduce culture shock, anxiety, and help you feel more prepared.

- Walking tours

- What is the protocol for if you need to leave? Can the program reimburse you for transportation back to the site if you need to take public transportation while everyone else walks back?
- Housing
  - How close is your home to the program site/excursions/public transportation?
  - Are there a lot of stairs in your home or leading up to your apartment?
  - What is the neighborhood like? Will you be safe at night? Who can you talk to about processing street harassment, theft, or other conflict?
- Transportation
  - How common are buses, trains/trams, and cabs/ubers?
  - How expensive are they? Are there discount options for buying uses in bulk?
  - Does the program have a transportation stipend?
- Mental Health
  - What are some methods you can use to coping with the emotional stress of an unfamiliar location, new people, and different cultural norms?
- Disclosure
  - How do you want your disability needs communicated to, or kept private from other program participants and permanent and visiting staff?

If you have questions and concerns about disability accommodations while abroad, contact the Global Education Office (GEO) ([geo@hampshire.edu](mailto:geo@hampshire.edu)) or the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS) ([oars@hampshire.edu](mailto:oars@hampshire.edu)).