

# Sexuality and Gender Abroad



The Office of Study Abroad is committed to MSU's values of diversity and inclusion. A broad range of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds inherent in diverse communities creates a rich learning environment from which all students can benefit.

When considering education abroad, it's important to think about the cultural and local attitudes towards Americans, tourists, and sexual orientation and gender identity in your intended host country. Be familiar with local laws and customs so you can make informed and safe choices about destinations and programs which will be the best fit for you and your needs.



## Preparing to study abroad (sexual orientation)

Cultures vary in terms of how sexuality and sexual identity are defined and understood. You are encouraged to explore and research the cultural, legal and social issues relevant to the host culture. Explore LBGQ travel guides and internet resources. Talk with other LBGQ and allied people about their experiences in certain countries or regions to gather as much information as possible upon which to make your choices and decisions. Some questions to ask include:

- How open will I be about my sexual orientation with my teachers, peers, friends, host family and others?
- How important is it to me to find other sexual minority students and friends while abroad? How will I make connections with other sexual minority students, local residents, or community organizations and gathering places?
- What resources are available in my host country for sexual minority people?
- Are there any LBGQ-friendly establishments nearby? How can I find them?
- What are my safety needs and perceptions, and how can they best be met? Is the program able to make special accommodations for students who request single rooms, private baths, or certain roommates?

- Will I need access to any medications, supplies, or services due to my transgender status? Are they available in my host country? If not, will I need any additional documentation to travel with my medication or supplies?

## Preparing to study abroad (gender issues)

One of the more fascinating and perplexing issues for students abroad involves relationships and interactions regarding gender identity. It is important to recognize how heavily cultural differences affect this dynamic of social exchange. Begin now by researching gender roles in the culture where you will be studying. Some questions to ask include:

- What are the legally recognized genders in the host culture?
- How are different genders perceived in the host culture?
- How might gender influence people's interactions with you?
- What disadvantages and privileges are associated with gender in the host culture?
- Is the program able to make accommodations for students who request single rooms, private baths, or certain roommates?
- Will I need access to any medications, supplies, or services related to being trans? Are they available in my host country? If not, will I need any additional documentation to travel with my medication or supplies?

# EDUCATION ABROAD

## FUNDING

Education abroad is an investment in your future. Like any other type of investment, it requires planning, careful management, creativity, perseverance and commitment. How can you pay for it? Start by planning far in advance (a year is suggested) and researching the many unique scholarships dedicated to education abroad.

MSU's Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Resource Center provides scholarship opportunities for current and prospective students at MSU. Check their webpage at [lbgtrc.msu.edu/resources/lbgtrc-scholarships-awards](http://lbgtrc.msu.edu/resources/lbgtrc-scholarships-awards) to find out more.

## Sexual Orientation Abroad

It is important that you are aware of and consider the implications of being identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual in the host culture and how being “out” might impact interactions. You are going abroad to experience a different way of life, and with that comes the opportunity to explore your sexual orientation in a new context.

Do you anticipate “coming out” during this experience abroad? Do you want to connect with local LGBTQ organizations or support services while abroad? Think about how you will answer questions about your sexual orientation in the language of your host country.

## Gender Issues Abroad

The ways in which gender is constructed and legally defined in the United States may not correspond with cultural norms and definitions in other countries. This will become clearer to you as you begin making new friends and integrating into daily life abroad. Studying abroad allows you the opportunity to explore culturally-specific patterns of gender roles that may be different from what you are used to with a variety of genders.

Observe how gender interaction can provide deeper insight into the cultural values of the host country. Learn what the expected dress codes are for people of all gender and the consequences of not following those codes. Are there particular locations or activities in your host country that are considered unsafe for people of different genders? What are the social norms for romantic relationships?

How is sexual harassment defined and responded to in the host culture? Are there added safety precautions you must follow based on your gender?

## WHEN YOU RETURN

Preparing for your return home is just as important as preparing for your departure. Before you return to the United States it is helpful to consider how changes in your self-identity may affect your relationships with family and friends. Give thought to what you have gained from your program. What have you learned while abroad and how will you use this knowledge in the future?

Are you interested in sharing your story?

The Office for Education Abroad welcomes student articles, photographs and/or video submissions. Send submissions to [abroad@msu.edu](mailto:abroad@msu.edu) with your name, your program’s titles/dates and a short description. Also feel free to share your story on our social media using #spartansabroad.

## RESOURCES

### LBGT Resource Center (LBGTRC)

556 E. Circle Drive, Room 302  
Student Services Building  
Email: [lbgtrc@msu.edu](mailto:lbgtrc@msu.edu)  
Phone: (517) 353-7745  
Web: [lbgtrc.msu.edu](http://lbgtrc.msu.edu)

*The LBGTRC prepares students to thrive in our diverse world and provides support services for students marginalized by their sexuality or gender.*

### Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen)

427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 206  
International Center  
Email: [gencen@msu.edu](mailto:gencen@msu.edu)  
Phone: (517) 353-5040  
Web: [gencen.isp.msu.edu](http://gencen.isp.msu.edu)

*GenCen is focused on gender, feminist, and women’s studies. Its affiliated faculty and students study how people from diverse racial, ethnic, national, and sexual backgrounds live in and engage with the world and how processes of global change affect gender relations locally, nationally, and internationally.*

### Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives (I3)

426 Auditorium Road, Room 444  
Administration Building  
Email: [inclusion@msu.edu](mailto:inclusion@msu.edu)  
Phone: (517) 353-4563  
Web: [www.inclusion.msu.edu](http://www.inclusion.msu.edu)

*I3 can tell you more about how MSU supports students both on and off campus.*

### Office for Education Abroad (EA)

427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 109  
International Center  
Email: [abroad@msu.edu](mailto:abroad@msu.edu)  
Phone: (517) 353-8920  
Web: [educationabroad.msu.edu](http://educationabroad.msu.edu)

*The EA Advising Center is open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm and is a great place to begin the process of searching for a program and ask questions about scholarships, financial aid, the application process and various deadlines.*

## Education Abroad 101

Are you interested in going abroad, but don’t know where to start? Attend an Education Abroad 101 session to learn more! Sessions are held daily to help guide you through the first steps.

Friday, 2:00pm

Scheduled by appointment: [abroad@msu.edu](mailto:abroad@msu.edu)  
video available online

EA Advising Center

427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 108  
International Center