



# Rome Program Guide for Families

## What are the benefits of studying abroad?

Students who participate in the Rome Program benefit personally, academically and professionally. The program is often a maturing experience for students because they must learn to live in another country and integrate into another culture where English is not the primary language. Students learn to be more adaptable, handle stressful situations better and develop leadership skills.

Academically, students benefit because of the opportunity to take the same classes that are offered in Ames. The Rome Program is integrated directly with the curriculum of your student's chosen program of study. This means he or she would not need to spend an extra semester at Iowa State by participating. Rome Program participants earn Iowa State credit and are taught by Iowa State faculty members and European lecturers. All classes are conducted in English, and semester students have the opportunity to take an Italian language class on site.

In terms of professional development, students produce some of the best work of their studies at Iowa State while in Rome. This work can then be included in their portfolios to show to prospective employers. Not everyone has the opportunity to study abroad, so it is an advantage for students to list it on their resumes and integrate work created abroad into their portfolios.

## Can you guarantee the safety of my student?

Unfortunately, the College of Design can't guarantee that your student will be safe as he or she participates in the Rome Program. However, no one can guarantee that your student will be safe studying at the Iowa State University campus in Ames either. In Dsn S 301, students are advised

of dangers abroad and how to protect themselves and their possessions. There is a level of risk involved in everything we do, but the program tries to minimize risks by informing and advising students of them prior to departure.

## What is Dsn S 301? What is my student learning?

Dsn S 301 is a one-credit class required of all students who wish to participate in the Rome Program. Students take it in the semester prior to studying abroad. It provides a cultural introduction to Italy and covers the particulars of traveling and living abroad in addition to financial and logistical preparations. The class is designed to help prepare students for a positive personal and educational experience in Rome while assisting them with the development of realistic expectations about studying abroad.

Some of the topics included are:

- Overview of studio facility
- Overview of program housing
- Introduction to culture
- American and Italian cultural values
- Culture shock and re-entry shock
- Preparing to leave ISU
- Packing and airline baggage restrictions
- Airport security and traveling abroad
- What to do upon arrival in Rome
- Risks of studying abroad and safety strategies
- Health concerns, including prescriptions
- Money and banking
- Communications
- Food and shopping
- Public transportation
- Visa application procedure
- Costs of the program
- Scholarships

**What is culture shock? What is re-entry shock?  
How can I help my student through these experiences?**

Culture shock describes feelings such as anxiety, discomfort and disorientation that are experienced by anyone who is suddenly exposed to a new, strange or foreign cultural or social environment. It is a normal part of studying abroad, and the majority of students will be affected by it, although at varying levels. There are distinct stages: euphoria, confrontation, adjustment, and finally, adaptation. Everyone moves through the stages differently and at different rates. Your student may not get beyond confrontation or he or she may rapidly move to adaptation. The extent to which a student is affected will depend upon several factors such as their attitude, level of independence, and prior study or travel abroad experience.

You can help your student by recognizing the symptoms of culture shock, which are usually (but not limited to) feelings of depression, anxiety, loneliness, fatigue, insomnia and obsessive thoughts. Encourage your student to write in a journal, exercise, experience the city, and talk to a faculty member.

Your student may experience re-entry shock when he or she returns to the United States. Although it sounds unlikely, it can take many students a period of days or weeks to adjust to being at home again, especially after an extended period abroad such as a semester. The stages of re-entry shock include: leave-taking and departure (occurs shortly before leaving Rome), honeymoon (upon returning home), reverse culture shock, and readjustment.

Students dealing with re-entry shock may exhibit many of the same symptoms of culture shock. Your student may feel alienated, irritable or bored upon return because nothing can “measure up” to Rome. Your student may still look the same on the outside, but it is possible that a considerable

amount has changed on the inside. While it will be difficult, you do need to wait out this stage. Encourage your student to do the same things he or she did to combat culture shock.

**What documents or paperwork does my student need to study abroad?**

Students participating in the Rome Program are required to have the following items:

- Valid passport (birth certificate required for a first-time application)
- Study visa (obtained through Dsn S 301)
- Student status letter (accompanies visa)
- Passport photos: 2 for summer; 6 for semester (1 for visa application, remainder for Italian temporary residency paperwork)
- Comprehensive health coverage
- Completed ISUAbroad online application (details provided in Dsn S 301)

**Additional Rome Program Information**

- Information from today’s orientation including PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be available within a week at: <http://www.design.iastate.edu/ROME/orientation.php>
- The Rome Program handbook is available at: <http://www.design.iastate.edu/ROME/studenthandbook.php>
- Do you have a question about the program? <http://www.design.iastate.edu/ROME/faq.php>

If your question is not answered on the FAQ, please contact:

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