



diversityabroad

FUNDAMENTALS OF ADVISING
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
FOR EDUCATION ABROAD

SHORT COURSE SERIES



Introduction

Welcome to *Diversity Abroad's Short Course Series*. These 30-minutes e-learning opportunities are designed to provide professionals with insight and practical tools to support and advance inclusive excellence in global education.

Short courses are facilitated by experts in the field of diversity, inclusion, and international education. Each course includes a resource sheet of links and further information. For more information, please

visit: www.diversityabroad.org/shortcourses.



Instructor's Biography & Profile



Julia Rose Karpicz, M.A.

Assistant Director of Disability Services
School for International Training

julia.karpicz@sit.edu

- Works with students with disabilities at SIT Study

Abroad

- Experience as an Assistant Accommodations Administrator at the NYU Moses Center for Students with Disabilities.
- M.A. International Education, New York University
- B.A. Political Science, UNC Chapel Hill



Course Introduction

- The goal of this course is to provide an introductory overview of key considerations when advising students with disabilities for education abroad.

The course will explore the following content areas:

- Disability as an area of student diversity
- Facilitating access to the study abroad office
 - Physical accessibility; creating accessible materials
- Tips for advising meetings



DISABILITY AS DIVERSITY



Defining Disability (ADA)

- A person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or someone who is regarded as having such an impairment.
- **Major life activities include:** seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, and communicating as well as **major bodily functions** such as functions of the immune system, digestive, neurological, bowel, bladder, and brain.



Diversity of Disability

- Students who study abroad can have a range of disabilities, including learning / ADHD, mental health, physical, medical, sensory, and temporary disabilities.
- Students have diverse experiences with disability depending on their disability type, how and when their disability was acquired, access to resources, and other factors



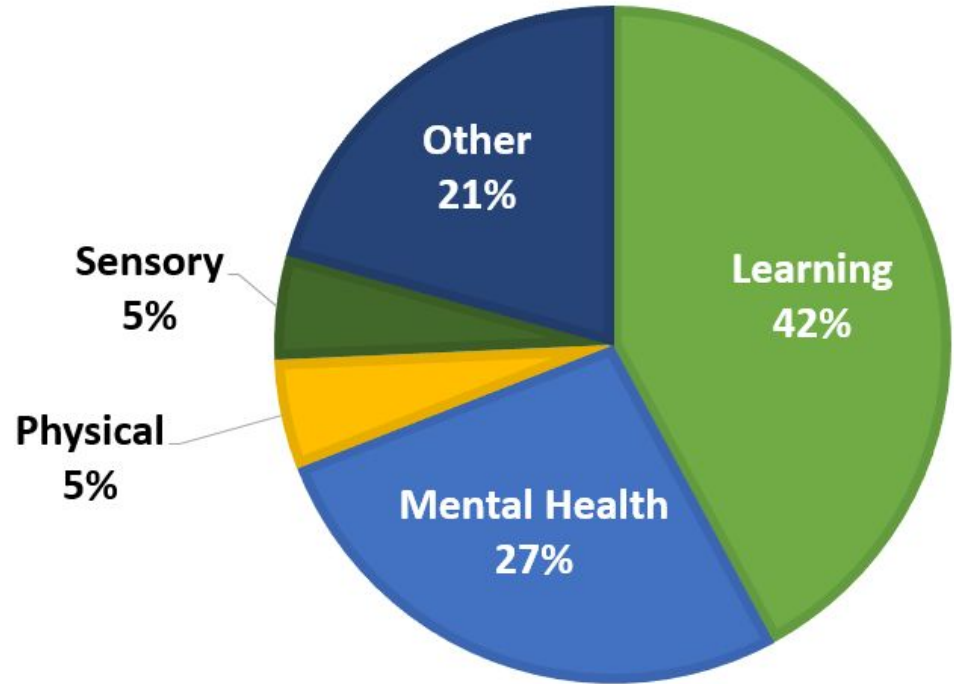
Diversity of Ability in Study Abroad

- **11% of U.S.**

undergraduates have a disability, roughly 2 million students ([Postsecondary Ed](#)).

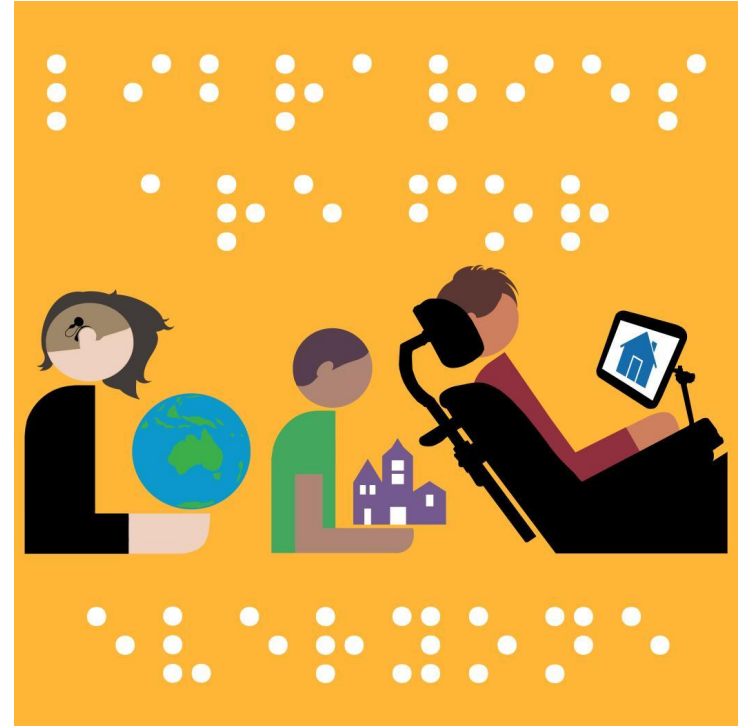
- **5.3% of U.S. study abroad**

participants identify as having a disability ([Open](#)



Diversity of Accessibility

- Accessibility is relative to the student and their environment
- Students with disabilities that may seem similar can have different access needs.
- Avoid making assumptions about what will or will not be accessible for a student. Instead, look to the student as the expert on their experience



Disability as a Social Identity

- Disability can provide a group identity for many students. Students may see themselves as part of a specific disabled community (ex: DeafBlind) or a larger community of people with disabilities.
- “Disability culture refers to the **community that is intentionally created when diverse disabled people come together** to affirm the community’s varied experiences that nevertheless often result in shared values.” ([Disability Resource Center, University of Illinois](#))



Disability and Intersectionality

- **Students with disabilities have multiple, intersecting, visible, and invisible identities which simultaneously shape their lived experience.**
This might include gender, sexuality, religion, veteran status, race, socioeconomic status, age, and immigration status as well as learning style, personality style, values and beliefs.
- Take time to **learn about the whole student** and consider all the resources that might be available to them through the university or study abroad office.



ACCESSING THE STUDY ABROAD OFFICE



Legal Context for Colleges / Universities in the US

- **Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities. These laws state that no otherwise qualified person with a disability shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of a public entity.
- Ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to materials, outreach, advising, and pre-departure activities through the study abroad



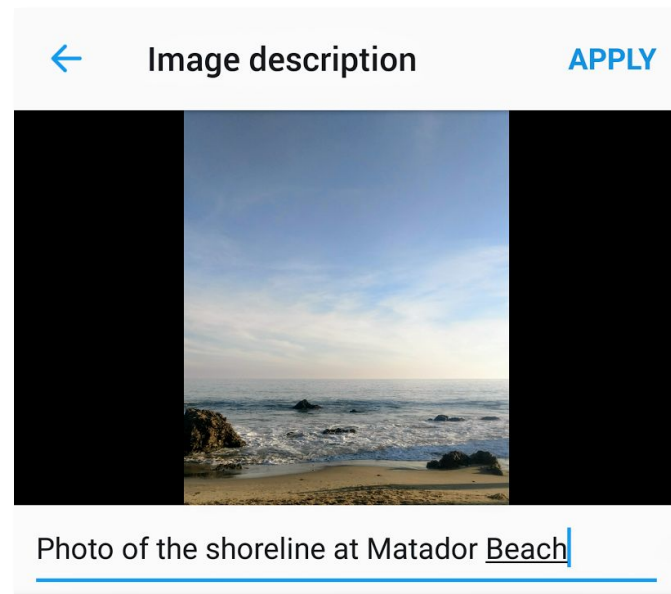
Physical Accessibility of the Study Abroad Office

- Is there an accessible entrance and accessible parking for the building?
- Is there an accessible restroom for students of all genders on the same floor or in the same building?
- Are there accessibility pathways to / within the office?
- Are staff familiar with policies regarding service



Facilitating Access to Study Abroad Information

- Is print information available in an **accessible digital format**?
- Is the study abroad website accessible for students using assistive technology?
- If your office uses social media for outreach, do staff use inclusive practices in posting content?



Facilitating Access to Presentation Materials

- Make sure that any promotional material for the event / presentation includes **information for requesting accommodations**
- Have a **digital copy of presentation materials**. Choose platforms that can create accessible materials, such as PowerPoint and Keynote
- Include **alternate text for any images, charts, or tables** in the presentation. Describe any images, charts, or tables verbally during the presentation.
- Choose **webinar platforms that are accessible** with a screen reader and can accommodate Real-Time Captioning (CART)



Include Disability Resources in Pre-Departure Materials

- Use acceptance and pre-departure materials to encourage students to share their accommodation needs by including contact information if students have questions about accessibility and information on how students can request accommodations

To request disability-related accommodations, admitted students should contact the Office of Disability Services. For more information about the accommodation process, documentation guidelines and a link to the accommodation request form, please visit the Disability Services website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services as early as possible for information and support.

Example from SIT Study Abroad Application Instructions



Creating Materials for Students with Disabilities

- Consider creating information (handout, webpage) regarding accessibility and accommodations for students with disabilities who are interested in study abroad, this resource might include:
 - Internal and external disability resources, including funding information
 - Program accessibility information.
 - Guiding questions for thinking about accessibility abroad
 - Information about the timeline and process for requesting accommodations



TIPS FOR ADVISING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



Advising: One-on-One

- Follow the student's lead in navigating the conversation. What questions do they have? What are they hoping to get out of the advising session?
- Identify programs that match academic and geographic interests
- Be mindful of not inquiring directly about a student's disability



Advising: One-on-One

- Avoid assumptions and take time to understand what accessibility means for the student.
- If available, provide objective program and country information; for example, types of public transportation that are available to students
- You don't have to know everything in the moment.
Note any questions about accessibility in order to gather more information between advising meetings.



Using Inclusive Language

- Familiarize yourself with the distinction between **person-first** (person with a disability) and **identity-first** (disabled person) language.
- If you are discussing disability with a student, ask them what language they use in talking about their disability **and** what language they would like you to use. For example, person-first language or identity-first language?
- **Be mindful of language that constructs disability as negative or abnormal:**
 - Ex: “We had another student who *suffered* from mobility *problems* / learning



Confidentiality

- Be familiar with your institution's policies on confidentiality of student information.
- A student's disability information, including their approved accommodations, is typically considered confidential information.
- Consider distributing a list of students studying abroad to your institution's Disability Services and Counseling Services



RESOURCES

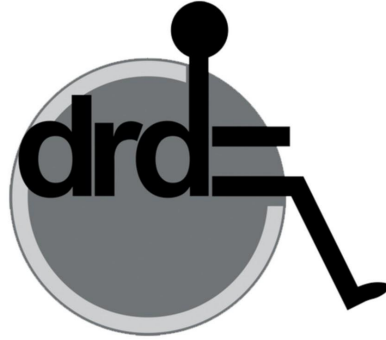


Getting to Know Your Internal Resources

- Collaborate with Disability Services in developing advising strategies and establishing who students can contact with questions about possible accommodations abroad.
- Collaborate with IT / Marketing / Disability Services to ensure that the study abroad office's website and application are accessible for any students using assistive technology.
- Maintain relationships with study abroad alumni with disabilities



Getting to Know Your External Resources



**Office of
Disability
Services**



Getting to Know Your Programs

- Gather information about site accessibility in advance:
 - Are there accessible classroom / housing / excursion / transportation options that are available?
 - Is there information available on disability-related legislation
 - How is disability defined or understood in the local context?



Working with Exchange Partners and Third Party Providers

- Does the partner / provider have an Office of Disability Services or process for requesting accommodations?
- For exchange partners, understand local laws and practices around accessibility, who typically provides services? What does accessibility look like at the university-level?
- If you are contracting with a U.S.-based provider, has it been established which institution will facilitate accommodations for students with disabilities?
- As you work with and gather information from partner / provider institutions, centralize that information for future reference





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THANK YOU!

