

Teamwork Makes the World Go Round

It's time to think about how you and the program staff can become allies and work together.

On Working with Hosts

“We need to realize that thinking outside the box is a requirement. When working with students with disabilities, we need to understand the actual needs of the students rather than assuming what their needs are. For example, when I have heard overseas universities say that we can't have a student with a mobility disability or one that is hard of hearing, we respond, 'Well, we actually managed to do it in China, so I'm pretty sure we can find a way to do it in Italy.' It is an opportunity to educate the host university on how the American system works and a chance to let them understand that we can't be barring students who otherwise show they are good fits for the program. We will hear back from some: 'We understand there will be other students coming in with similar needs, so what can we learn from this?'”



KAT DAVIS
West Campus Relations Manager
CET Academic Programs

On Disclosure

“The amount of lead time students give us and how much they disclose make a difference in how successful they are. We usually have no problems accommodating students who are open with us and tell us early on in the process. The crisis stories come from the students whom we didn't know about until they were on-site or about to go abroad, and then we don't have any time to make accommodations. Or we've purchased all the excursions already and none are accessible. We all want these students to succeed on the program, and that's why we are asking them for this information.”

On Lack of Access Abroad

Home institutions, providers and host institutions all share the desire to accommodate and support students and their goals for the experience abroad. That said, in reality there are sometimes aspects of programs abroad that are not modifiable, such as local regulations in regard to preserving the facade of historic buildings. What we work to do is identify more accessible locations or housing options, as well as provide additional financial or logistical on-site support. We pay careful consideration to how we inform students of the realities on-site, so that we can manage expectations, which is a primary concern for all students to ensure the most positive experience abroad. The earlier we can inform students about conditions the better. Our overall goal is to advise students on a one-on-one basis, rather than providing broad recommendations.



CHRISTIE JOHNSON
Senior Director, University Relations
Academic Programs International

On Planning Ahead

We ask our on-site resident directors on a regular basis to complete a comprehensive accessibility questionnaire about the housing, city, host institution, cultural perspectives, and more—anything that might affect the student's on-site experience. Surveys are updated periodically (and as we add new programs) to ensure that the information we have is accurate. We are committed to gathering and maintaining accessibility information to make our programs as accessible as possible to as many students as possible. When assessing new programs and evaluating existing programs, accessibility is always a factor: we ask how accessible a particular site might be, and we seek to identify what we can do to accommodate students (within the confines of what we can actually change and affect). When hosting students with disabilities, we have adjusted our on-site handbook to reflect only recommended facilities that are accessible to all students within the group, so students with disabilities are included in activities outside the scope of the program itinerary.