



**SYA**

**SCHOOL YEAR ABROAD**

**Student-Parent Handbook**

2019-2020

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*This Student Parent Handbook is a fluid document and SYA reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to amend, delete, or alter any of the contents of the Handbook as necessary. Should significant changes occur during the academic year, they will be communicated to families. This version was last revised on 3/25/19*

# Welcome to School Year Abroad

The *Student-Parent Handbook* is designed to help enrolling families prepare for their upcoming SYA adventure. The Handbook outlines SYA's purpose, as reflected in its history and mission, summarizes many of the policies and procedures that guide all four campuses and answers frequently-asked questions regarding what many SYA alumni consider the most significant year in their educational careers.

Students and parents are expected to read, understand and comply with all provisions in this handbook; they are common to our campuses in China, France, Italy and Spain. Upon arriving overseas, the country-specific Resident Director (RD) and faculty will provide students with more detailed information pertaining to their particular campus.

No handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question regarding school policies. Further, the need may arise for SYA to revise, add or cancel policies. Therefore, SYA reserves the right to add new policies and to change or cancel existing policies at any time. The most up-to-date version of the Handbook can always be found on the SYA website ([www.sya.org](http://www.sya.org)).

It is important for enrolling families to be familiar with SYA policy before departure. To ensure this, SYA requires both students and parents to submit a signed form acknowledging they have received the Handbook and recognizing it is their responsibility to understand the content and to comply with the information contained therein.

## Communication

### Between parents and SYA

Page two of the Handbook lists the names and contact information for several key administrators at SYA. Once students are assigned an advisor and placed with a host family, those two boxes can be filled in as well. If parents have a question or concern about their child's SYA experience that cannot be adequately answered or explained by the student, the first person the parent should contact is the advisor. If a parent is unable to reach the advisor or needs to bring the conversation to another level, the next person to contact is the Resident Director at the SYA campus. While the parents' instinct might be to call the SYA Home Office, due to time zones or international calling charges, the vast majority of the time it is faster and more informative to speak directly with the adults on the SYA campus overseas.

The Resident Director will typically send letters and other individualized communication via email. Additionally, throughout the year the Resident Director will email parents updates on school activities. Grade reports and advisor comments will be made available online. In an urgent matter, Resident Directors rely on the phone as the most effective way of reaching a parent.

**It is imperative for SYA to know how to reach parents at all times -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, throughout the year -- in the case of an emergency. If parents are traveling or away from home,**

**they should notify their child’s Resident Director and provide any new or temporary contact information so that they can be reached. The Resident Director will act *in loco parentis* if parents cannot be reached in an emergency, but will make every effort to contact parents first. Likewise, parents can call the Resident Director 24/7 on his or her cell phone in the case of an emergency.**

For more information on medical emergencies and procedures, please read the Health, Safety and Emergency Management section of this Handbook.

#### Between parents and children

Email and communication applications such as Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp are the most convenient and economical means of communication. Students are required to have a cell phone with a local number, so calling is another option; however, parents should not contact students during the school day. To leave an urgent message, parents can call the school number, and SYA will give the student a message to call back after classes. For any sensitive or urgent issue that may be upsetting to the student, SYA asks parents to first communicate with the Resident Director to ensure that the situation is fully understood and appropriate support is available as necessary. Families may also call students at their host family’s home, but students are not to use the home phone to make long-distance calls.

#### Cell phones and wi-fi

Families should note that cell phone billing works differently abroad than it does in the United States. Although incoming calls are free to a mobile phone, rates for calls back to the U.S. are high, and even local calls (especially to another cell phone) are quite expensive. Calls made from landlines in either the host country or the U.S. to cell phones abroad are also expensive, often much more expensive than calls to fixed phones. To read more about phone tips, please refer to the Student Life section.

Students will have access to wi-fi at all SYA campuses and be given a Slack account for general communications. All host families have a cable or wireless connection to the internet. Families must not offer to install telephone lines or pay separately for internet and email services in the host family’s home.

#### Frequency of communication with family and friends

The convenience of internet-based communication is clear; however, SYA discourages students from relying on it to correspond excessively with family and friends back home. Doing so will have a significant effect on the student's ability to learn the local language, keep up with coursework and integrate into the culture in a meaningful way. Students are expected to immerse themselves in a different culture and way of life. To do so, they will need to “let go” (at least temporarily) of their life at home. Although it might seem impossible at first, the sooner students can leave their daily life back home, the sooner they can concentrate on constructing a daily life in their adopted country, with all of its benefits.

SYA suggests speaking with family once a week on the phone or via computer (it is best for these conversations to take place on the weekend or in the evening and not during school hours). Parents should refrain from sending frequent text messages to students. As text messaging and applications like WhatsApp have become more popular, students who are frequent texters have an increasingly difficult time engaging in the local culture. The simple act of pulling out a phone to check a message often results in a missed social opportunity and can be quite disruptive during school hours.

## **Student Support**

SYA provides students with a highly-individualized experience within the context of a community-wide endeavor at each campus. The SYA curriculum is designed to facilitate the integration of the individual into all aspects of the overall program. That said, it is inevitable for there to be challenging moments for students while adapting to a new school and integrating into a new peer group and family structure. For some students, that adaptation may be somewhat delayed or fall short of success. It is important to understand that living in another country for an extended time tends to amplify problems of any kind and that SYA does not possess the level and extent of resources that students may have at their disposal at their sending schools. Listed below are the support systems we primarily rely on to assist our students.

### Advisory program

The SYA advising system is intended to give students support and counsel throughout the year, as well as to provide communication regarding student progress, academic and otherwise, to both the parents and sending school. Students are assigned a faculty advisor in September. While periodic advisory meetings are scheduled, students should feel free to seek out their advisor informally at any time. The advisor's role is essentially one of partnership, one who facilitates rather than resolves all issues.

Each SYA advisor will send an introductory letter to parents in September explaining his or her role and sharing observations about each student's first weeks at SYA. The advisor also provides written comments at the mid-point of trimesters I and II and at the end of the year. During the third trimester, the advisor will only reach out to the parents if there is a particular concern they feel needs to be addressed; parents, however, should feel comfortable reaching out to advisors at any time. Advisor comments provide information on students' level of success in class, in their relationship with the host family and their integration into the community.

### Academic support

Because of the diversity of SYA students' academic and language background, some students may need additional support in order to meet the demands of the curriculum. The instructor is the primary resource readily available for extra help if a student has difficulties in meeting the objectives of the course. Additional forms of assistance may include a peer-tutoring program, study groups and review sessions, but availability depends on the given year and the instructor. Private tutoring in English is seldom available, and involves a financial arrangement not coordinated by SYA.

### College counseling

SYA employs a part-time college counseling liaison who works with all students in the college selection and application process, oversees all college testing during the year and completes all necessary communication with the sending school college counseling staff.

SYA is a test center for the PSAT, SAT and Advanced Placement exams. SYA orders the PSATs and APs for students (the cost of which will be deducted from each student's incidental account), but students must register and pay for the SAT exams themselves. The college counseling liaison will be sure to remind students of registration deadlines and stands ready to assist with any problems or questions they may have. SYA is *not* a test center for ACT.

Students will be provided with a Naviance account (go to [naviance.com](http://naviance.com) for further information) to assist in the college search and application process. The SYA college counseling liaison will be in contact with the sending school college counseling staff as appropriate during the year.

The SYA college counseling liaison will prepare a mid-year report for seniors. The report will be forwarded to the sending school's college counseling office in February for submission to colleges. Additionally, the college counseling liaison and Resident Director will prepare a confidential report for each junior, summarizing the student's SYA experience, which will be sent to the sending school's college counseling office in June. Both reports are confidential and are not shared with parents.

### Mental health counseling

As noted in the Health, Safety and Emergency Management section of this Handbook, SYA does not employ mental health counselors onsite, but has a contract with the Truman Group (<http://www.truman-group.com>) to provide individual counseling for our students, via video conferencing, while overseas.

### Host family coordinator

Each SYA campus has a dedicated host family coordinator whose duties include: placing students with an appropriate host family, building and maintaining strong relationships with the host families in their community, providing orientation and guidelines for both the students and families, and serving as intermediary should problems arise between the student and family.

### Co-curricular coordinator

SYA also appoints a faculty or staff member to be in charge of both seeking out and coordinating opportunities in which students can participate in the local community. The co-curricular coordinator is an excellent resource for students either looking to get involved in a particular activity or in need of fresh ideas for new extracurricular activities to try.

# SYA Mission Statement

SYA guides students through a challenging curriculum focused on developing skills for successful engagement in an increasingly interdependent world. Central to the SYA experience is the adventure of understanding different languages, cultures and peoples.

## Our Focus

While students learn much by simply taking part in an experience abroad and living with a host family, SYA designs its programs to develop four key student skills:

- Language Proficiency - The ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages.
- Critical and Creative Thinking - The ability to develop new ideas and challenge assumptions in situations with limited information and/or language skills.
- Intercultural Competence - The ability to understand different cultures and perspectives with increasing sophistication and adapt to new situations empathetically and appropriately.
- Independence and Interdependence - The ability to be self-reliant and collaborate with others in a constructive way.

## Our Approach

SYA strives to take full advantage of our resources to provide the highest quality education. To that end, all of our programs are designed to be:

- Intentional - SYA programs are based on and designed to meet clear, achievable, and observable objectives.
- Place-Based - SYA programs are intricately tied to the surroundings, people, and culture of our host countries.
- Experiential - SYA programs are explicitly active and participatory and include major involvement in the outside community.
- Intercultural - SYA programs require active engagement in the local culture, developing perspective and empathy.

*SYA is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges*



# Academics

Students at SYA are part of an exciting program that deliberately and intensively focuses on both the culture of the SYA host country and the challenges of the world at large. A demanding academic curriculum, a variety of co-curricular opportunities, a supportive host family and an extensive educational travel program will engage students in meaningful ways and help them to successfully integrate into a new school, community and country. Proficiency in the host-country language will be an essential part of achieving this level of integration; this goal is reflected in the importance SYA places on teaching and learning language in a variety of contexts.

## Policies

### Required courses

Students are generally required to take six courses. English and the target language are required for all students. Requirements for other courses will vary from campus to campus. Enrolling students will be sent course descriptions and specific information about course requirements and selection during the spring.

### Mathematics

SYA offers five levels of mathematics. If a student requires a math course not offered by SYA, it must be arranged among the family, an online provider and the sending school. Parents must inform the Resident Director of any plans they have made for their child to take an online course.

### Learning accommodations

SYA does not formally evaluate or determine accommodations for students with suspected learning disabilities.

SYA normally only provides extended time accommodations for students who have specific documentation from their sending school. In order for students to receive extra time, the sending school must send SYA documentation highlighting the nature of the issue and the particular level of accommodation that was in place before arrival. SYA will do what it can within its means to provide reasonable accommodations.

SYA cannot submit applications to the College Board in order to request first-time accommodations for students. If a student has applied or already received accommodations, they must supply SYA with their approval letter and number in order to receive the accommodations when taking standardized testing at SYA. SYA must receive copies of these important documents before the start of the school year.

### Attendance

SYA rules and consequences regarding attendance are simple. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, assemblies and required individual or group activities. Field work and longer

excursions, for example, are integral elements of the program and attendance is mandatory, unless explicitly noted otherwise. If a student is truly sick with a fever or other serious illness, the student must inform the host family, and then either the host family or the student must notify the school administrative assistant or Resident Director at least a half hour before the start of school. More detailed information is available in the “Missing School Because of Illness” section.

### 1. Lateness

All SYA classrooms are within a one-minute walk of each other, so there is no reason to be late to class during the day. Tardiness is disruptive, and students will be sanctioned for repeated or excessive lateness. Students who arrive late to a class will be marked tardy. Faculty members will report all late arrivals and absences to the school administrative assistant. Three tardy arrivals are equal to one unexcused absence.

### 2. Unexcused absences

If a student arrives more than 10 minutes late to any class, it will be considered an unexcused absence, and the student may not be allowed to enter as it is disruptive to the progress of the class. Students who miss a class are required to do the necessary work for that class. Students who miss a test, quiz or paper deadline because of an unexcused absence risk receiving no credit for that work.

Consequences for unexcused absences vary. They may include detention, supervised study hall, early curfews or loss of weekend or independent travel privileges. Referral to the Disciplinary Committee (DC) may be considered as well. With a first unexcused absence, the student’s parents may be notified by the Resident Director. After the second and third unexcused absences, a written reprimand is given to the student, with copies placed in the student’s file and sent to parents, the student’s sending school and the SYA home office.

Four unexcused absences will result in a formal status review for that student, led by the Resident Director who will meet with the student, advisor and some of the student’s teachers. The meeting will focus on the student’s reasons for difficulties with attendance, as well as academic progress or lack thereof and any other factors that may be interfering with the student’s success. Emphasis will focus on development of plans for ongoing improvement and accountability. As noted, consequences may include detention, required study halls, early curfews, loss of independent travel privileges if available, or other sanctions. Referral to the Disciplinary Committee may also be considered. The student’s parents will be notified before the status review, but do not participate in it. A written summary of the review will be given to the student, with copies placed in the student’s file and sent to parents, the student’s sending school and the SYA home office.

An unexcused absence for an entire school day may result in automatic disciplinary probation status and possibly in a formal status review, depending on the number of classes missed. Disciplinary Probation in such cases means that further unexcused absences or violation of other SYA rules could result in dismissal from SYA, following a Disciplinary Committee meeting.

Students who miss a significant portion of the SYA experience, for medical or other reasons, may be faced with not earning credit for a marking period. In these instances, the Resident Director and faculty will consider the reasons for the absences and make a recommendation to the Head of Schools and Programs whose decision will be final.

Three tardies = One unexcused absence

One tardy of more than 10 minutes = One unexcused absence

Four unexcused absences = Formal Status Review

Entire day of unexcused absences = Possible disciplinary probation

The Resident Director will make the final determination of whether an absence or lateness is excused.

SYA publishes each student's attendance record in the grading portal at the end of each marking period. This report is available for students, parents and sending school to see.

### 3. Missing school because of illness

If a student is sick on a school day, s/he must inform the host family and either the student or host family must call the school at least 30 minutes before the student's first commitment.

If a student is ill enough to miss school, then they need to stay at home and get well. Students may not go to school on a day they called in sick. If a student is absent on a Friday or a weekday immediately preceding a holiday, they may not leave the host home that evening or participate in independent travel that weekend. SYA will phone the host parents to ensure their cooperation.

After a certain number of medical absences, determined by the Resident Director, a written excuse from a medical doctor may be required to document illness that mandates absence from school.

### 4. Excused absence for individual commitment or travel

From time to time an exceptional opportunity (e.g. college interview, special conference or academic invitation, exchange or the like) may arise that warrants a request to miss one or more classes. The process for making such a request is as follows:

- Student speaks to the Resident Director about the request. In consultation with the student's advisor and faculty members, the Resident Director will determine whether the request can be honored as an excused absence.
- If the student's academic standing in a class is not satisfactory, the faculty member of that class may determine that it is not in his/her interest to miss the class and recommend to the Resident Director that the request be denied.

- If the permission is granted, it is the student's responsibility to be informed about work that will be missed before leaving and complete it before returning for class. In some cases, the Resident Director may provide a special form to facilitate this communication with the faculty members.

#### 5. Absences immediately before or after vacation periods.

Absences on school days immediately before or after vacation periods are automatically considered unexcused unless explicitly approved by the Resident Director well in advance of the absence. Parents should know that missing school on these days is almost never approved. Parents or students should refrain from booking travel on those days.

#### 6. Early return for graduation

Only seniors whose sending school graduation is scheduled before the end of the SYA school year may arrange to return in time to participate in that ceremony. Normally, this means only one day before commencement. SYA does not allow students to return for the days of festivity that precede the commencement ceremony itself if SYA is still in session.

## **Use of technology at school**

### Cell phones

While there will be occasional times when students use cell phones for class, the presence of cell phones in the learning environment can create a significant distraction. It should be noted that cell phone use in the classroom at SYA is strictly prohibited unless explicitly requested and permitted by the instructor. Otherwise phones should remain off and put away. No blanket permission will be given for consistent use in the classroom. Inability to follow this rule may result in disciplinary action, including referral to the Disciplinary Committee.

### Computers

Students may use a computer in class only when explicitly asked to do so by their instructor. SYA does not grant blanket permission for computer use, except in the rare case of an approved accommodation for a demonstrated and documented need. This rule also applies to note taking and electronic dictionaries. Students are expected to fully engage in class without the constant distraction of a device with an internet connection.

For more information on SYA's technology usage policies, please reference the appendices.

- SYA's Internet and Electronic Communications Usage Policy can be found in Appendix A
- SYA's Social Media Comments and Participation Policy can be found in Appendix B

## Evaluation & Reports

SYA uses an A-F grading system, with “D-” being the minimum passing grade. There are three official marking periods a year; those grades will be published on the SYA transcript, along with the year-end grades.

### Grading scale

A+	97-100	C+	77-79
A	94-96	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63

### Incompletes, pass/fail, auditing

SYA faculty members publish their policies on accepting late work and allowing students to make up work on their syllabus. If a student fails to complete required work within the allowed period, the missing work will be calculated as a zero.

SYA does not assign “Pass/Fail” grades for credit courses nor include an indication of an audited course on the transcript. Noncredit courses such as music, martial arts, phonetics, etc., will be assigned a “Pass/Fail” grade.

### Add/drop period and grading policy

There are different reasons why a student would add and/or drop a course: because they want to take a different elective, because they need to adjust their placement level or because they need a course reduction. In the first case, opting to change an elective, students are normally allowed to do so only during the first two weeks of the first trimester; thereafter, they are committed to completing the courses in which they are enrolled. Courses dropped within two weeks of the start of the first trimester do not appear on the transcript. Results in courses that students pursue longer than two weeks normally are not erased from the transcript, unless the Resident Director and student made a pre-existing arrangement.

Switching sections, due to placement issues, can be discussed among the student, faculty member and Resident Director throughout the year. The course in which the student spends the majority of a trimester is the course that will be recorded on the transcript. It is possible to have two different levels on the transcript, reported as partial-credit courses.

Course reduction, while not a common option, may be approved by the Resident Director after discussion with the student, parent, sending school and SYA faculty member involved.

When students switch from one section to another of the same course in language or math, the

Resident Director will work with the faculty member to ensure that a fair grade is assigned for the trimester. Factors to consider include whether the student moved up or down and at what point in the term the switch was made. The grades earned in the new section weigh most heavily in the calculation of a trimester grade. If the student is moving down a level, the slate is usually wiped clean and the assigned grade will be from work done in the new course, though the faculty member will have some flexibility determining the grade.

On rare occasions, the faculty member may recommend withdrawal from a course, in which case the grade on the transcript will normally be that of the last completed marking period.

### Grade reports

All SYA courses are on Canvas, our learning management system, allowing students to see their grades as soon as coursework has been assessed. Formal reports, with grades and comments, are published by faculty at the end of each trimester and made available to parents and sending schools via an online portal provided by SYA. As a school specializing in teaching world languages and providing an international immersion experience, SYA hires native speakers to teach the majority of the courses in addition to language; therefore, faculty member comments may be written in the native language of the faculty member; SYA does not translate these comments into English.

Students receive the same grade reports that parents receive, and SYA encourages parents and their children to go over the grades together, as such dialogue can lead to honest discussion of grades and progress. If parents have further questions about the reports, they may find online translation tools useful. And of course they may always contact the student's advisor or Resident Director for clarification.

Advisor comments, also published three times a year, are always written in English and may reflect the perspective of other faculty members in addition to reporting on important aspects of life outside of school.

SYA does not calculate grade point averages nor rank the students.

### Academic probation

Students who receive two grades below "C-" or one grade of "F" in one marking period will automatically be placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation will not be allowed to travel independently and may lose other privileges. They may, for example, be required to return home early on weekdays or stay in on weekend nights. Resident Directors will send a letter to the student's parents and sending school explaining the probationary status. In addition, SYA will notify the local host family. The goal is to identify students who need assistance and guidance to get their work done and to create structures and incentives to help them succeed. Even students earning one or no grade below "C-" may be placed on academic probation if the Resident Director believes it to be in the student's best interest.

### Course credit/level

Most SYA courses carry one credit. A single-credit course meets for the equivalent of four to five times a week, for a minimum of 45 minutes, for the entire academic year. Nearly all SYA classes are taught at either the honors or Advanced Placement (AP) level. For information on the credit or level of a specific course, please consult the course offerings listed on our website ([www.sya.org](http://www.sya.org)). All AP classes at SYA are submitted to and approved by AP Audit. Both credit and level are indicated on the transcript.

It is important to note that while SYA is fully accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), SYA cannot dictate to the various sending schools which courses they shall grant credit in order to fulfill their graduation requirements. To ensure a smooth re-entry (if the student attends SYA as a sophomore or junior) or return for graduation (if the student attends SYA as a senior), all families are urged to make an appointment with a senior administrator at their sending school to discuss credits and graduation requirements before attending SYA.

### Credit for art and physical education

SYA does not offer full-year, for-credit courses in studio art or physical education. For students whose sending school requires them to participate in studio art and/or PE, SYA is able to help the student create a plan for fulfilling and tracking the requirements in an appropriate co-curricular activity. It is the family's responsibility, however, to communicate with the sending school regarding what the requirement consists of and clearing with them the proposed activity at SYA. This must be arranged before the start of the year. At the end of the year, SYA will report on the student's progress with regard to the agreed-upon arrangement.

### Course taken outside of the SYA curriculum

On rare occasion a student may need to enroll in an online course or take a course offered at a local school or university if it fits into their schedule. This should occur only if the course is not offered at SYA, as is most commonly the case for some levels of mathematics or U.S. History, but is necessary to meet graduation requirements at the sending school.

The family is responsible for the cost of any courses outside of the SYA curriculum; it is not covered by SYA tuition. The family is also responsible for researching an online course that fits their child's needs and for speaking with the sending school about whether or not they will give credit for the course. Any plan to take a required online course must be communicated to Resident Director well in advance of the start of the year.

### Transcripts

Official transcripts are created only by the Home Office and go out under the registrar's signature. Transcripts are ready by July 1, but will not be released until all outstanding bills have been paid to SYA. Any report of grades that Resident Directors are called upon to send to colleges in the course of the year is unofficial and may have a different, less formal design; it is labeled "Report of Grades" or may be included in a simple memo or letter signed by the Resident Director.

The SYA transcript lists the course title, designated level (AP or H), grade earned at each trimester, year-end grade, credit earned and whether or not the course was taught in the target language. The transcript also reports the date on which the student either completed the course of studies, withdrew or was required to withdraw from SYA.

## Student Life

During the first days and weeks of school, the Resident Director, advisor and faculty will provide formal orientation sessions and activities to help students familiarize themselves with SYA. They will place students in the appropriate language and math classes, explain and clarify rules and procedures, assist students with the experience of living with a host family and appreciating cultural differences and similarities, and guide them in ways to ensure as much as possible their health, safety and well-being. The Student Life section of the Handbook is designed to provide a glimpse of what daily life might look like -- from riding public transportation to eating at a local cafeteria.

### General Information

#### Cell phones

All SYA students are required to have a local cell phone for daily use and emergency contact. SYA recommends that students purchase a cell phone with prepaid minutes while they are abroad; the price of a new cell phone ranges from \$50 to \$150. The Resident Director will advise students about local options during orientation.

SYA students typically purchase prepaid minutes rather than commit to a 12-month contract. The fee per minute can be as high as 40 cents, but students can receive calls on their cell phones for no cost. Some students who have brought their U.S. cell phones have successfully exchanged their U.S. SIM card for a local SIM card, but anyone interested in that option should check his or her phone specifications to make sure it is a tri-band, unlocked phone that will work in Europe or China. As a warning about expensive phones, know that each year many cell phones are lost, forgotten or stolen.

Responsible and thrifty use of a cell phone abroad affords convenience and security, but excessive use dilutes the experience of living abroad, just as excessive reliance on computers does to maintain contact with friends back home. Successful SYAers find that speaking to their parents briefly once a week works well. A popular way for students and family to save money is by making use of free services such as Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp. Note, however, that these services may not be available in China unless accessed via a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

#### Time zone information

During most of the year, European time is six hours later than Eastern Standard Time in the U.S.; Therefore, a call placed at 8 p.m. in New York rings at 2 a.m. in Rennes, Viterbo or Zaragoza. There is a seven- or five-hour difference for brief periods in the fall and spring since Europe goes off Daylight



Saving time earlier in the fall and on to it later in the spring than in the United States.

In China, there is no Daylight Saving time. When the U.S. is on Daylight Saving time, Beijing is 12 hours later than U.S. EDT. In the winter, when the U.S. is on Standard time, the time difference between EST and Beijing is 13 hours.

### Computers

Students are required to bring either a laptop computer or tablet with them to SYA for word processing, internet research, accessing the SYA Learning Management System and staying in touch with friends and family from home. While the SYA campuses have some backup computers onsite, students should not rely on these exclusively. It is also recommended that students bring their own flash or memory stick for computer data storage and transfer.

Most new electronics come with a universal AC converter that can handle 220V, so students will need only a plug adapter (which can be bought locally for the equivalent of a few dollars). Students bringing a device with a grounded prong should also bring a 3-to-2-prong adapter as it is not so easy to find locally. The device's "input" limits should appear on the back of the little box on the cord.

Students should pack all cables/adapters and software related to any external devices they may bring with them as part of their carry-on luggage.

Students should bring a photocopy of their receipt along with their documents to prove to customs officials that they are "importing" used equipment for personal use, not bringing in new equipment to be sold.

### VPN use in China

VPN use in China is a frequent topic of conversation. There are occasions when access can be inconsistent and there are questions about future accessibility or extent of accessibility. Regardless, SYA students use VPNs daily to access information, communication applications and school work. SYA recommends that students purchase and install a VPN on their phones, laptops or other devices before departing for China. Experience in Beijing has shown ExpressVPN as the best choice for students.

### Internet

All SYA campuses have wi-fi, and all host family homes have an internet connect -- typically wi-fi.

### Internet Streaming and Computer Games

Watching TV programs or movies in English and playing video games are significant distractions from the local culture; screen time can cut into time for engaging with the host family, studying and being in the local community. Therefore, SYA encourages students not to bring/download movies and games, and asks parents not to send them abroad.

## Mail

Students should receive first-class letters at the address of the school, not at their host family's home. Letters should be addressed to "School Year Abroad" with the student's name on the envelope so it is not inadvertently opened by SYA staff.

## Packages

Almost anything parents might want to send in a "care package" can be purchased locally. While students will certainly be happy to receive expressions of love and affection, parents should bear in mind that shipping costs for things available locally can be substantial.

- Packages should be sent to the school's address, with the student's name clearly marked. Parents should use caution when sending packages, as well as common sense. Many items that parents often send are easily found in both Europe and China and may be less expensive locally, including vitamins and cold weather clothing. Sending food, prescriptions or over-the-counter medicines runs the risk of customs returning the package to the sender, postage due. Worse, the student may have to pay significant customs or delivery fees at the time of delivery, often interrupting classes to do so. Parents should keep in mind that a package may take some time to be delivered or may be opened in transit. Whatever is being sent should be able to stand the test of time. The issue of packages is particularly difficult in Spain. It is best to check directly with the Spain school administration before sending anything.
- Parents should read the Medication Management Policy (See Appendix C) and note that in most cases sending prescription medication through the mail is illegal and therefore not permitted. SYA maintains an up-to-date list of frequently used medications that are unavailable in each host country. Prescriptions from outside the host country are not valid.
- Parents should not insure packages for large amounts, since customs duties are based on the package's declared value. Sending jewelry, computers or other electronic appliances may require the purchase receipt to be presented at customs and can result in significant delays, substantial customs charges, as well as possible theft and enormous headaches.
- Many packages need to be retrieved from customs or the post office and may require significant paperwork and time. This has increasingly become a large burden for both students and staff.
- For students in China, the most inexpensive and reliable way to send small packages is through the U.S. postal service.
- For students in Europe, the most economical way to send small packages is by International Parcel Post (USPS). Other options include UPS, FedEx or DHL. Please note that USPS cannot be used to send packages to Spain -- only UPS, FedEx or DHL.

## Banking

In Europe and China, foreign minor students are not allowed to open their own bank accounts. SYA recommends that students bring a debit card from a U.S. bank for cash withdrawals. Since Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) cards provide an easy and economical way of obtaining cash in Europe and China, all parents should set up a joint ATM account with their child. Parents are advised

to ask the issuing bank about withdrawal fees and ease of use of a debit card versus a credit card abroad. Parents (and other relatives or friends) can make dollar deposits in the U.S. for no fee, and the student can easily withdraw foreign currency from most ATMs. Many banks offer accounts with a monthly withdrawal limit, and parents can easily monitor spending online. ATM cards must be compatible with the largest networks of ATM machines, such as CIRRUS or NYCE. Students need to make sure that the PIN is a number, not a word or series of letters, and does not begin with 0 (zero). If the ATM card is new, it must be activated before the student arrives abroad as some cards cannot be activated through foreign ATMs.

Debit cards should be the type that functions both as an ATM (to withdraw cash) and as a credit card (to make purchases), as it offers the most convenience and flexibility. Due to strict anti-fraud measures, families should make sure to inform their bank very clearly that the withdrawals (on ATM) and charges (on credit cards) will take place abroad.

### Budgeting

At SYA the major essentials are taken care of: textbooks, laundry, daily transportation to school, all expenses on school trips, and room and board for every day of the school year (including vacation if the student stays with his/her host family) will always be covered, either by tuition or by the deposit parents make to the Incidental Account. As a result, students' real need for additional "spending money" is limited. Students will have to purchase school supplies such as pens and notebooks, as well as their own toiletries. These personal items do not "come with the house," and students must not ask their host family to supply them. Students will also want some money for snacks and entertainment. An average weekly budget is the equivalent of about \$40 to \$50 per week in Europe and a bit less than that in China where snacks, entertainment, souvenirs, etc., can be less expensive. Cell phone charges will be another individual expense. Additional money should be budgeted for independent travel expenses if the family plans to approve independent travel.

Lavish spending can alienate students from each other and from their host families, and will not necessarily enrich their experience. It is important that prior to departure, families discuss expectations for student spending.

While not mandatory, it is recommended that students arrive with €50 (EURO) or ¥300 (RMB) so that they are able to purchase incidental items prior to visiting an ATM. Do not bring U.S. dollars, as they have become increasingly difficult and expensive to exchange. SYA will not exchange U.S. dollars nor accept personal checks for students except in the case of an emergency.

### Student lunch

Student lunch is always provided for at SYA. Host families provide students with lunch on weekends and holidays. SYA provides for lunch on school days, either at a local restaurant or nearby school cafeteria. On school travel days, students will either eat together at a restaurant or be provided money to buy their own lunch.

### Local transportation

Options for public transportation vary from school to school. Students may take a bus to school, possibly a subway, drive with one of their host parents or perhaps walk. Students may not use UBER or other ride-sharing services. Commutes range from five to a maximum of 45 minutes. Depending on the kind of local transportation available, SYA will provide either monthly passes or money to allow students to commute to and from school and to get around the city. In some countries students opt to buy bicycles to get to school. Additional information about bicycle riding and other physical activities can be found in Appendix D.

### Dress code

SYA's dress code is quite simple: clothing should be neat, clean and in good repair. Clothing should be appropriate for the activities in which the student is participating and should not be offensive. Students at SYA China wear the BNU HS #2 uniform to school. Students in Europe should expect to dress in a culturally-appropriate way for someone their age in the local community. This is generally more conservative than what would be expected in the United States. Resident Directors will talk about dress code during orientation in-country and reserve the right to send students home to change their clothes if he or she finds their clothing to be inappropriate.

### Curfew

Each SYA campus sets curfews for both weeknights as well as weekends, evenings as well as mornings. Students are expected to respect the curfews, returning home on time in the evening and leaving home at an appropriate time in the morning. On school nights (usually Sunday through Thursday), students will be required to be home with their host family by a certain hour, in time for dinner and with sufficient time after dinner both to visit with the family and do their homework. Curfews on Friday and Saturday nights are later. Curfews are also in effect at all times when traveling, except in the company of the students' own parents or guardians.

### Weekends

Students spend most weekends in their host city, though school trips may encompass all or part of a weekend. During weekends students will have time to spend with their host family, visit with their SYA classmates and other friends, go shopping or to the movies, go out in the evening, and, of course, do their homework.

If a host family decides to travel over the weekend, the student normally goes with them. If a student chooses not to travel with their family on the weekend, they must make arrangements with the host family and the Host Family Coordinator or Resident Director to stay with another family, as students are not allowed to stay at their host family home overnight without the family present.

At most SYA campuses, students may travel outside of their host city for the day. In all cases the Resident Director and the host family must be informed and students must return by curfew. The Resident Director will discuss country-specific details during orientation.

### Vacations

Students are not permitted to return home during the school year (this includes during winter and spring vacations), as it creates a significant disruption in the student experience abroad. In the case of a medical or family emergency, parents must submit a formal request for leave and the request must be approved in advance by the Resident Director. Any student who travels home without receiving prior permission will be presumed to have withdrawn from the program and will not be permitted to return.

### Visits from home

If planned carefully and thoughtfully, visits from home can be a great experience for students and a way for them to show off their new home abroad. For families, it can be rewarding to see their child building independence and showcasing their language skills. In order to make the experience as beneficial as possible and to avoid unnecessary disruption to the experience abroad, families agree to the following guidelines:

- Parents refrain from visiting before November 1st.
- Students may not leave the host city overnight to meet visiting parents before winter break.
- Parents notify the Resident Director of their visit well in advance.
- Students may not spend the night with their parents on a school night.
- Students will not be allowed to miss class in order to visit with their family. Any missed classes are subject to SYA's attendance policy.

Students traveling outside of their host city to meet family may do so only with the appropriate permissions in place on the independent travel form.

## **The Homestay**

Living with a host family is a crucial component of the SYA experience. Many SYA graduates consider their relationship with their host family the most memorable part of their year abroad and maintain that relationship for life.

The host family will provide students with involvement in the community, authentic means for learning about a new country and culture, and countless opportunities to develop language proficiency that are not possible in the classroom or on one's own. By participating fully in the host family life, students will come in direct contact with valuable cultural, sociological, personal, political and practical aspects of life in the country that complement and complete the SYA academic program.

SYA carefully selects host families that reflect the wide and rich diversity of family situations in country. The host family is considered an extension of both SYA and the student's own family and is responsible for providing an appropriate level of support at all times, while also holding the student accountable for his or her behavior. The host family is expected to report to the Resident Director any concerns that arise, as well as any violations of family expectations or SYA rules.

### Host family selection and placement

All SYA campuses have a dedicated host family coordinator whose job it is to get to know the families and the students well enough that they can make the best possible placements.

Many SYA host families have been hosting for several years, and when a new family approaches SYA, it is typically because they have a friend, neighbor or family member who has enjoyed their SYA hosting experience. All prospective host families are interviewed by the host family coordinator in their homes, provided with appropriate orientation, training and supervision and have a background check in their own country. Even seasoned host families are visited by either the Host Family Coordinator or the Resident Director once a year.

Host family assignments are made by the host family coordinator on the basis of criteria appropriate to SYA, in consultation with the Resident Director, using information provided by the student, his/her parents, host families and other interested parties. Student evaluations of their host families are done mid-year and at the end of the year.

Once host family placements are made during the summer for the coming year, the only changes made before the end of the first few weeks of the school year are for documented medical reasons or other extraordinary circumstances. After that, there is a process for investigating the need for and making any necessary host family changes during the school year. The host family coordinator, in consultation with the Resident Director and faculty advisors, monitors and assesses all host family/student relationships for the entire year.

SYA organizes several opportunities throughout the school year for host families to meet with and provide feedback to SYA staff, including picnics, orientation meetings and evening events. In addition, the host families are invited to many SYA social activities in order to see their host son or daughter outside the home and to feel part of the greater SYA community.

### Living with a Host Family

Students should understand that their assigned family will likely differ in interesting ways not only from their own family back home but from the host families of other SYA students. Students are encouraged to take an active interest in the lives of their host family members and to use the local language as a means of communicating with them.

As students take up residence with their host family, SYA expects them to conform to standards of mutual respect and adaptability, as this will enrich their entire experience and the experience of their hosts. The host family will expect their student to use common courtesies that are the norm for well-mannered family members everywhere.

Students will be expected to:

- Abide by their family's rules and standards of honesty, punctuality, orderliness, communication and openness.

- Keep their room clean. Make their bed and pick up their clothing. The bedroom is not “theirs” ; it belongs to the host parents, and they expect them to keep it in order.
- Be polite! A little politeness goes a long way. They should say good morning (audibly) to all family members. Always say good night to everyone; always say where they are going, and when they’ll be back. Always say goodbye when they leave and hello when they return.
- Adopt family norms for greeting, kissing and hugging (only if comfortable).
- Respect the hours their family keeps - hours of meals, of leaving and returning home, of going to bed, etc.
- Inform their family in advance (by phone if necessary) of any change in plans that may cause them to miss a meal or return home late. If possible, students should give their family such information a day in advance.
- Initiate and respond to verbal cues with a sincere and respectful tone.
- Eat meals with their family in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Limit the use of electronic technology in the home (cell phone, internet use, iPads) to maximize contact with their family, build stronger and lasting relationships, and use the local language.
- Practice energy consciousness, understanding their collective role as global consumers of precious, limited resources.

It’s important for students to remember that they went overseas to adapt to a new way of life. Students should be humble, self-effacing and above all, considerate of everyone in their new family. Students shouldn’t be afraid to laugh at themselves as they stumble over words and make mistakes. Once the students begin to relax and enjoy the process of getting to know their new family, the family will relax too!

At the same time, students shouldn't be afraid to be themselves in conversation. They should say what they think; ask about what they don't understand; shouldn’t hesitate to make a joke. Students don’t have to agree with their family’s political opinions or their views about the United States. If a student hears something they disagree with, or something they know is inaccurate (“All American families live in large houses”), the student can politely take issue. It is the SYA student’s job to represent his or her sense of country fairly and accurately. Everyone should be able to accept legitimate criticism, but also feel they can defend their society when they think it’s proper.

#### Discretion and generosity with the host family

Experience has shown that the ways in which SYA students talk about and spend money can have a significant impact on the quality of their relationship with their host families. To avoid misunderstandings and to help ensure that this crucial relationship is as healthy and happy as possible, SYA invites students and parents to read and discuss the observations offered below.

Since SYA seeks host families who are loving and generous, without regard to socio-economic status, students will find themselves in families ranging from wealthy to modest. The less privileged, who have limited discretionary income, always budget very carefully. Even the more fortunate

families tend to watch expenditures more carefully than many American families. Hopefully, SYA students will adopt equally frugal and discreet habits.

SYA's goal is for students to live respectfully within their adopted culture and to help erase the stereotype of American materialism that is often seen in the media. Students are urged to live modestly and be generous and thoughtful to their host families. Lavish presents are not necessary or appropriate, but students who bring home an occasional flower or pastry, remember birthdays or offer to purchase and cook a special meal go a long way toward proving that U.S. teenagers can be thoughtful and generous. On the other hand, those who never seem to have money for toothpaste or school supplies, never bring home a gift, and yet regularly go out for movies and pizza or travel independently could be labeled as self-indulgent, immature and inconsiderate.

The SYA year is a great opportunity for students to learn to manage money by discussing appropriate spending levels with parents, setting a weekly budget and sticking to it. It is frequently the students who make the decision to get by on a little less who integrate themselves most successfully and have the richest host family experiences.

## **Co-Curricular Activities**

SYA believes that the greatest success of a study abroad experience depends in part on students' full engagement in both the local community and the host country. "Engagement" in an SYA host city can include athletics, community service, tutoring, exchanges with local schools, enrichment classes, internships and the like. The level of success and happiness SYA students experience results directly from their ability to adapt to, be informed by and participate actively in the host culture. SYA consciously designs opportunities and classroom teaching to enrich that experience.

SYA's curriculum, schedule and commitment of resources reflect a primary interest in helping the student understand and become an active participant in the local community, as well as meet and work with students the same age in local, national and international exchanges. For that reason, each SYA campus will organize only a few U.S.-style after-school activities, such as the yearbook or talent shows. There are almost no SYA athletic teams, as it is preferable for students to play on local teams, using the host country language to communicate with their teammates.

A co-curricular coordinator at each school will help students investigate, find and develop opportunities to become involved in activities of interest to them. SYA has set funds, per student, for reimbursement of co-curricular enrollment expenses. Each SYA campus has a different requirement and model for tracking student involvement in co-curricular activities that will be explained during the opening weeks of school.



## Travel

SYA believes that travel can be a transformative experience, providing students with a valuable opportunity to see themselves, their family and communities, and their native countries through a different lens. Travel, therefore, is an integral part of SYA's curriculum and takes on many shapes and sizes throughout the year. There are day-long excursions, overnights and multi-day trips in which the students will participate with the school, with host families and with friends.

### Educational travel

With classes focused on the local or national culture and language, SYA seek ways to integrate classroom learning with learning opportunities outside the classroom by means of educational travel. SYA travel includes both large and small group travel, and all SYA school trips are adequately staffed by faculty to provide for the supervision and safety of students. The cost of school travel, including all meals, is included in the tuition.

### Independent travel

When a student travels outside of the host city, beyond a predetermined radius at each campus and unaccompanied by an adult, for any reason other than an approved part of fieldwork for school, we refer to this as Independent Travel. Independent Travel can lead to greater immersion in the host country culture, increased language proficiency and a furthering of the student's educational goals. But Independent Travel takes maturity and responsibility; it is an earned privilege, not a right. Students who are in good academic standing, working toward mastery of the host country's language, sufficiently connected with their host family and able to make healthy and appropriate decisions when engaged in independent activities may earn the privilege to travel independently.

Students wishing to engage in independent travel may only do so with written permission from both the Resident Director and the student's parents or legal guardians. In addition, students must sign the Independent Travel form, formally acknowledging their responsibilities. These forms and procedures must be repeated for each Independent Travel request. Expenses related to Independent Travel are not covered by SYA.

Student Independent Travel guidelines:

- Each time a student is to spend a night without adult supervision or away from the host family, SYA requires written permission and release of responsibility from the student's parents or legal guardians.
- Students applying for permission to travel independently overnight must plan to travel in groups of two or three. Students are not granted permission to stay overnight alone.
- On rare occasions, including but not limited to situations in which a student is meeting an adult family member or other SYA-approved party, students *may* be granted permission to travel alone if there is someone waiting for them at their destination point. Parental permission, as well as the approval of the Resident Director, is required in these cases.
- SYA actively discourages travel outside the country in which the student is studying. Because of safety, logistical and curricular concerns, travel outside the host country is only permitted

during the winter and spring breaks.

- The Resident Director reviews plans proposed by the student to make sure they are well conceived, safe, complete and feasible.
- SYA does not accept blanket permissions. SYA does not accept permission by phone or email message unless the email contains the appropriately signed, scanned permission forms.
- Students may not use UBER or any other ride-sharing service.
- Students may not use Airbnb or similar services. The accommodation must have a front desk that is staffed 24-hours.
- Students must follow the plans that have been approved. If circumstances require students to alter their plans in any way, they must communicate with the Resident Director and their parents/legal guardians immediately to secure permission for the change and to provide updated contact information.
- All final approval of independent travel is at the discretion of the Resident Director and may be revoked at any time and for any reason. SYA does not accept responsibility for lost travel expenses in these cases.

Steps to secure permission to travel:

- Student completes required tasks on Independent Travel Checklist and submits to RD.
- Student and parents/legal guardians read, sign and submit Statement of Informed Consent, Acknowledgment and Assumption of Risks and Release from Liability and Indemnification form.
- Student plan trip, obtaining written invitations if visiting family and/or confirming travel and hotel reservations.
- Student fills out Permission for Independent Travel form (available electronically or in print from the school office abroad), providing phone number and address for each night of trip, means and schedules of transportation, information about traveling companions, times of departure and return.
- Student fills out supplementary forms for staying at a private residence or solo travel if applicable.
- Student presents form to advisor for preliminary approval and signature.
- Student presents form to Resident Director for final approval and signature.
- Student sends a copy of the approved form(s) home as an email attachment for parents/legal guardians to sign and leaves one copy on file in SYA office.
- Student's parents/legal guardians sign and return form directly to SYA administrator, as indicated on the form, before deadline provided. Acceptable means of delivery include: fax, postal mail or as a scanned attachment from a parent's email address.
- Student signs the independent travel form, and the school provides an authorized copy of the form for the student to deliver to their host family.
- Upon return from travel, students provide a paper receipt from the accommodation(s) where they stayed, signed and dated by a front desk employee.

A copy of the Informed Consent and Release form parents and students will need to sign when or if they elect to participate in Independent Travel can be found in Appendix E. All other Independent Travel forms are available through the administration office at each SYA campus.

## **Health, Safety and Emergency Procedures**

Care for the physical and emotional health, safety and well-being of all students is SYA's highest priority. During orientation and throughout the year, SYA will provide students with the necessary information to take care of themselves, behave in ways that are culturally appropriate and avoid situations that can be dangerous. Students, however, need to do their part as well by adhering to the guidelines presented in this document.

### **Health**

#### Access to medical care

Medical assistance is readily available in all SYA host cities. The Resident Director or assistant will arrange routine medical appointments as needed and will implement established protocols to respond to any medical emergencies that may arise, including those requiring evacuation. Each SYA campus keeps on file all the medical information provided by each student's family and physician.

#### Health notification to parents

The Resident Director will notify parents as soon as possible whenever a student suffers a significant injury or serious illness. SYA does not allow elective surgery such as the extraction of wisdom teeth without parents' authorization. Even in an emergency, SYA makes every effort to contact parents or others they designate before proceeding with surgery or other treatment. During the enrollment process, parents are required to sign a medical consent form allowing SYA to arrange for appropriate care in case parents cannot be reached.

#### Insurance coverage for medical expenses

SYA purchases health insurance for all students that covers most medical expenses incurred outside the United States, during the SYA school year. The policy reimburses up to \$500,000 of care per injury or sickness, with no deductible or co-pay. It also includes coverage for emergency evacuation. The policy does not cover pre-existing treatment received in the U.S., and coverage for pre-existing conditions is limited. If payment is required, students are expected to pay at the time of service; parents may subsequently submit their claim(s) to the insurance company. This insurance is only in effect when the student is overseas and enrolled in SYA.

#### Mental health

SYA does not employ mental health counselors onsite, but has a contract with The Truman Group (<http://www.truman-group.com>) to provide individual counseling for students via video conferencing, while overseas. These services include communication with parents and doctors back home. The Truman Group also provides school-wide support and/or training as determined by the Resident Director. If a student wishes to access other options, SYA will help arrange appointments

with local mental health professionals if available. Please note that access to English-speaking mental health professionals is significantly more limited than at home, and sometimes altogether unavailable.

SYA's provided insurance will cover up to \$1,000 for mental health counseling while overseas and enrolled at SYA. After the limit has been reached, parents will have the option to continue on their own.

Another option some students have found effective is to continue counseling via Skype with their mental health professional from home.

#### Temporary medical leave

If during the course of the school year a student is unable to continue to participate in the program because of significant physical illness or psychological distress, a temporary medical leave to return home for treatment may be requested. Request for medical leave may be initiated by parents, the student or the school administration. SYA will make the final determination regarding whether temporary medical leave is granted.

In the event of a requested leave, the parent or guardian submit a "Request for Medical Leave" form documenting the nature of the leave, expected treatment (if available) and travel plans for the student's return home.

Students may be asked to continue coursework remotely and may have their workload modified. Because of the place-based nature of the SYA program, SYA cannot provide extended medical leave. If a leave extends to more than 30 calendar days, SYA will likely recommend withdrawal.

If the student plans on returning to the program, parents must provide the name and contact information of the treating healthcare provider and sign a waiver allowing the SYA administration to speak directly with the provider. As condition of return, SYA requires a letter from the provider stating that he or she believes the student is fit to return to the program.

If during a medical leave the student begins treatment using new or modified medications, the student must remain on leave until a physician determines the effectiveness of the treatment. SYA faculty and staff are not trained to provide adequate monitoring or evaluation of the effectiveness of prescribed medications. It is important to note that SYA-provided overseas health insurance can only be used while the student is overseas -- it will not be in effect while student is at home.

Upon approval of a request for temporary medical leave, the SYA Resident Director will communicate with the sending school that the student is on temporary medical leave. SYA will not provide details or share confidential information with the sending school, but rather will refer the sending school to the parents for any questions they may have.

### Student withdrawal

In the event that a student chooses to withdraw from SYA for any reason, parents must submit a Student Withdrawal Form indicating the date of official withdrawal and detailed travel plans and permissions for departure. Please note that the parent is responsible for any travel expenses that result from a withdrawal, as well as understanding the terms of their tuition reimbursement coverage, if any. It is SYA's policy that students who withdraw from the program return to their home country as soon as possible. Students may not remain with their host family after withdrawal.

Once all remaining tuition, fees and travel costs are paid, SYA will issue an official transcript, noting date of withdrawal and including any completed credits earned. If no credits have been earned or the withdrawal is before the end of a marking period, students will receive an unofficial progress report with grades for completed work. SYA does not publish the grade of 'Incomplete' on transcripts or grade reports. SYA does not report the reason for withdrawal or circumstances leading to withdrawal on report cards or transcripts.

Withdrawal from the program is permanent. A student may not return to the program after withdrawal. Upon approval of a request for voluntary withdrawal, the SYA Resident Director will communicate with the sending school that the student has withdrawn and will provide a broad reason for withdrawal. Categorical reasons for withdrawal may include but are not limited to: personal, academic, medical, anticipation of disciplinary response. SYA will not provide details or share confidential information with the sending school, but rather will refer the sending school to the parents for any questions they may have. It is important to note that once the student is back home, the SYA-provided overseas health insurance is no longer valid.

## **Safety**

### Safe school environment

SYA is committed to providing a work, school and host family environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive or disruptive, including sexual harassment. In particular, faculty, staff, students and host family members are prohibited from engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct against any other member of the school community. Actions, words, jokes or comments based on an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, etc., will not be tolerated.

Any harassment that creates a hostile, intimidating and/or offensive work, academic or host family environment also is prohibited and will be subject to disciplinary action. Anyone who experiences or witnesses sexual or other harassment should report it immediately to their advisor, a faculty member or the Resident Director. Students can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation. All allegations of sexual harassment will be promptly investigated and the appropriate corrective action will be taken to address the problem. A copy of SYA's Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy can be found in Appendix F.

### SYA Sanctuary Policy

Sanctuary is a non-disciplinary response to situations in which student health or safety is compromised. SYA recognizes that students sometimes make unhealthy decisions and put their safety and well-being at risk. Understanding that there is a reluctance to ask for help if disciplinary action could follow, the Sanctuary Policy allows a student to reach out proactively without invoking a disciplinary response. (For more information, go to pp. 34-35.)

## **Emergency Management**

### Emergency procedures

SYA has undertaken a comprehensive safety audit, reviews emerging safety concerns to update the site-specific Emergency Action Plans for each campus and stands ready to implement these emergency plans for the organization as a whole and for each of the SYA campuses. SYA constantly monitors both U.S. government sites, such as [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) and [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), and receives daily notices from the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC). In addition, Resident Directors receive special bulletins from the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate and from local contacts and law enforcement agencies, notifying them of any safety concerns.

Students are informed of and trained in SYA emergency procedures during orientation and as necessary throughout the year by the Resident Director. In the event of any emergency, the Resident Director will provide regular updates to parents, host families, students and faculty to ensure a safe, informed response by the community.

Another important asset in responding to an actual emergency situation is SYA's Emergency Response Team comprising the SYA President, Head of Schools and Programs, Director of Finance and Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Senior Communications Officer and the appropriate Resident Director. This group gathers quickly, assesses needs, implements appropriate responses and communicates with parents, students and sending schools as necessary through email.

### Student preparedness

All students are asked to register with the U.S. State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, known as STEP. Enrollees receive important information directly from the Embassy about safety conditions in their designated country via travel alerts and warnings. This feature helps students make informed decisions about travel and helps the U.S. Embassy contact students in an emergency, whether it is a natural disaster, civil unrest or family emergency. Parents may also enroll in STEP to monitor safety conditions for a specific destination. STEP is a free service to all U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip/stay with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. <https://step.state.gov>

SYA requires students to be reachable on short notice and at all times. Students must have a cell phone with a local number to keep communications open outside the school setting. SYA provides Emergency Contact cards including host family's address and phone numbers, as well as contact information for the school, Resident Director and designated "safe haven." In addition, the card lists local emergency numbers such as fire, police and ambulance. During orientation, Resident Directors detail their campus-specific emergency procedures to all students.

Throughout the school year, SYA provides best practice guidance to the students about being aware of their surroundings and how to stay safe and enjoy self-planned trips. This includes watching and listening to local news reports, being aware of travel delays and conducting themselves discreetly so as not to draw unwarranted attention to the fact that they are U.S. citizens overseas. In addition, safety drills are rehearsed at school in order to practice emergency procedures. SYA is in regular contact with the U.S. Consul in the local area, and we receive alerts and updates from the U.S. Embassy in the host country.

#### Emergency notification

SYA students are required at all times to have on them a charged phone with sufficient credit for making calls. SYA maintains a list of all student cell phone numbers, and in the case of an emergency, this is SYA's best means for quickly reaching the students.

In the case of an emergency, students and parents may reach their Resident Directors by way of cell phone -- throughout the school year, day and night. If the Resident Director knows he or she will be without cell service for an extended period of time, the RD will designate a responsible faculty member to take emergency calls. In this case, the Resident Director informs students, host families, parents and the home office of the on-call faculty member's name and contact information.

While in a general emergency SYA reaches out to the parent body by email, in an individual situation, the Resident Director will call the parents. **Parents must ensure SYA knows how to reach them at all times -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, throughout the year. If parents are traveling or away from home, they should notify the student's Resident Director to provide alternative contact information as needed. The Resident Director will act in *loco parentis* if parents cannot be reached in an emergency, but will make every effort to contact parents first.**

## **Discipline Philosophy and Procedures**

SYA's discipline philosophy is based on a goal of providing a safe and secure environment for students in which they may take full advantage of the unique structure of the school. SYA's discipline philosophy focuses on behaviors that compromise student health and safety, and those behaviors that negatively affect other members of the SYA community: other students, faculty and staff, host families, and the broader communities in which the students live and travel. SYA expects students to behave in a way that reflects positively on themselves and the school by being kind, supportive, thoughtful and above all, safe.

SYA is not a boarding school nor a day school. School rules apply at all times during a student's participation at SYA. This environment may involve significantly more independence, risk and responsibility than some students are used to; therefore, a student's level of earned independence is always linked to their adherence to these rules. If at any time during the year it becomes clear to the SYA administration, through the discipline process or a formal status review, that continued participation in the program does not meet SYA health, safety or discipline standards, a student may be asked to leave the program.

SYA responds immediately and decisively when an infraction occurs, and the response to each infraction varies according to the circumstances of the infraction and its impact on student well-being and safety. SYA understands that adolescents will at times make missteps, and SYA strives to provide a disciplinary environment that addresses the situation without being excessively punitive. When appropriate, SYA focuses on support, counseling and treatment; however, there are behaviors that are unacceptable in any situation and will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

### **Rules**

#### **Infractions likely to result in immediate dismissal**

SYA does not tolerate the following behaviors:

- Possession, purchase or distribution of illegal drugs. Intent to purchase or distribute illegal drugs
- Sale or distribution of prescription drugs or other legal but potentially dangerous substances.
- Engaging in or attempting to engage in non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
- Rental or use of unauthorized private accommodation, including but not limited to private residences, hotels, Airbnb or similar
- Providing false information on independent travel forms



### **Other Major Infractions**

These infractions may result in possible disciplinary committee meetings and may incur a wide variety of responses, including counseling or treatment if deemed appropriate. Discipline responses may lead to dismissal from the program. Rules in this category include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Inappropriate use of alcohol or prescription drugs
- Use of cannabis
- Various forms of dishonesty, including plagiarism and theft
- Violence and/or threatening behavior involving any member of the SYA community whether in person or online
- Violation of SYA's anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy
- Violation of SYA's internet and electronic communications policy
- Leaving the host city unaccompanied by the host family without prior permission
- Spending a night anywhere other than in the host family without proper permission from the school administration
- Providing false information about current whereabouts
- Failure to respect curfew hours established by each SYA campus -- returning after curfew in the evening or leaving before curfew ends in the morning
- Failure to call for help or assist another member of the SYA community when in an unsafe situation
- Non-disclosure of prescription psychotropic medications
- Violation of local laws or standards
- Dangerous, offensive, disruptive, aggressive, disrespectful or inconsiderate behavior unacceptable to SYA or the host families
- Driving an automobile or motorized cycle of any sort. Riding on a motorized cycle. Riding in an automobile except with host families or SYA faculty or with special permission from parents, host parents and the Resident Director

### **Possession, purchase, distribution or use of illegal drugs**

All possession, purchase, distribution or use of illegal drugs is against school rules. SYA's response to this behavior distinguishes between possession, purchase, distribution or use as well as the type of drug involved. In Europe, use of cannabis by adolescents is at or slightly below usage in the U.S.; however, it is used much more publicly. Use by SYA students is not tolerated; possession, purchase and distribution of cannabis will likely result in immediate dismissal from SYA. Any involvement (including use) with any other illegal drug is not culturally tolerated in any way and will likely result in immediate dismissal from SYA.

### **Sale, distribution or misuse of prescription drugs or other legal but potentially dangerous substances.**

SYA's response to the sale or distribution of prescription drugs or other dangerous substance is likely immediate dismissal. Misuse of one's own prescription medication is also against school rules; however, the response likely will be based on the specific circumstances and may involve non-disciplinary action if deemed appropriate.

### **Non-Consensual Sexual Contact**

Sexual assault occurs when a person is forced or coerced into sexual activity without giving consent. Consent means that both people in a sexual encounter agree to it, and that either person may decide at any time that he or she no longer wishes to consent and that he or she wants to stop the activity. Consenting to one behavior does not obligate a person to consent to any other behaviors. Consenting on one occasion does not obligate a person to consent on any other occasion.

Consent may be withdrawn at any time during an encounter.

### **Alcohol consumption and inappropriate use**

Local laws and customs regarding alcohol consumption vary in the countries in which SYA students live and travel. Local customs are often (but not always) more lenient than local laws. SYA's approach to alcohol use takes this into consideration.

SYA's response to a drinking incident increases proportionately with the negative impact on student health, safety and well-being. In some families in Europe, a small amount of alcohol may be served to students on occasion in the host family, although this norm is not universal and students should not expect it to be the case. Any alcohol use outside of the host family or school setting is reported to parents, even when deemed culturally appropriate.

The best strategy for avoiding issues with alcohol consumption is to not drink at all. There are numerous, documented health reasons for adolescents to avoid alcohol. In addition, decision-making capability for adolescents is severely affected even after a small amount of alcohol and can put students in extremely dangerous situations. The safest choice is to abstain. SYA highly recommends that parents speak to their child about alcohol and arrive at strategies to stay safe.

Examples of inappropriate use include but are not limited to:

- Purchase or storage of alcohol
- Purchase or consumption of hard liquor of any kind
- Drinking to the point of drunkenness or intoxication
- Adding alcohol to the drink of another student or pressuring another student to drink alcohol
- Taking advantage of an intoxicated student in any way
- Abandonment or failure to aid an intoxicated student in danger

### **Smoking and tobacco products**

For the purpose of this policy, "smoking" also includes the use of electronic smoking devices which create aerosol or vapor. And "tobacco product" means any product containing, made or derived from tobacco or nicotine that is intended for human consumption, whether smoked, heated, chewed, absorbed, dissolved, inhaled, snorted or ingested by other means.

SYA believes that smoking is one of the worst habits that students can adopt while abroad. That being said, attitudes about smoking, even involving adolescents, are much more relaxed in the

countries where SYA operates schools. In some cases students at local schools can be seen smoking right outside the school.

SYA does not have a school rule against smoking or tobacco use. It is also not illegal for adolescents to smoke in any of SYA's host countries. It is illegal to purchase tobacco, and even though this law is not often enforced, it is a law which SYA expects students to follow. Parents also have the right to tell their students not to smoke. SYA expects students to follow the following guidelines:

- No smoking on school grounds or near school grounds or any building used for school activities
- No smoking at or near the host family home
- No smoking on school trips or when representing the school in another setting

### **Bystanders**

Students who have knowledge of or are witness to serious misconduct where student health and safety is particularly at risk (including use of illegal drugs or sexual assault) are expected to report such misconduct to school administration. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

### **Duty to Act**

SYA expects students to stay safe and help keep others safe; however, if they do find themselves in unsafe or dangerous situations, they are expected to call for help for themselves or a peer in need. Students involved in rule breaking who call for help are covered by SYA's Sanctuary Policy and will not face disciplinary action.

### **Sanctuary Policy**

Sanctuary is a non-disciplinary response to situations in which student health or safety is compromised. SYA recognizes that students sometimes make unhealthy decisions and put their safety and well-being at risk. Understanding that there is a reluctance to ask for help if disciplinary action could follow, the Sanctuary Policy allows a student to reach out proactively without invoking a disciplinary response.

This policy applies in instances of alcohol or drug use or overdose, danger due to physical or psychological distress, or presence in an unsafe situation or environment and is designed to promote greater safety for SYA students while abroad. If Sanctuary is granted, neither the student receiving Sanctuary nor the student requesting assistance on behalf of another student will be subject to disciplinary action for violation of SYA's drug, alcohol or whereabouts policies.

- **Use of Sanctuary**

When a student is facing or is in a potentially unsafe situation, or witnesses or has knowledge of another student or students in a similar situation, students may contact any faculty or staff member and clearly express their intent to seek help through SYA's Sanctuary program. The student must do so before the faculty/staff member has reasonable suspicion or is in a position where the violation is likely to be discovered. If during a Sanctuary admission a student becomes unmanageable, disruptive or threatening, Sanctuary will be revoked. Students who request Sanctuary for

themselves or others are expected to be truthful about all aspects of the situation. Failure to do so will initiate a disciplinary response, up to and including dismissal from School Year Abroad.

Once Sanctuary is in place, the Resident Director and the Head of Schools and Programs will determine an appropriate response designed to address the ongoing needs of the student.

- Results of using Sanctuary

In cases involving drugs and alcohol, the student may also be required to undergo a drug and alcohol evaluation by an outside substance abuse professional (at his or her parents' expense), and will be subject to random, confidential drug testing (again, at his or her parent's expense). Failure to complete the requirements for evaluation and treatment after Sanctuary has been granted may lead to disciplinary consequences, including dismissal from SYA. Before a student is permitted to resume school activities (academic or extracurricular) following the use of Sanctuary, permission must be granted by the Head of Schools and Programs.

Parents are informed of Sanctuary requests and appropriate SYA-affiliated professionals will be brought in as well, as deemed necessary by the Head of Schools and Programs, in order to support the student. SYA will not report Sanctuary cases to sending schools or to colleges.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

The great majority of discipline issues that take place at SYA do not involve violation of major rules and are addressed in informal agreements between students and the school administration. Parents are informed of this type of situation, but an official report is not sent to the sending school.

The Head of Schools and Programs and/or Resident Director oversee SYA's formal disciplinary procedures. They have the discretion to respond to incidents of misconduct or infractions of SYA rules.

In the case of violation of a major school rule, the Resident Director and/or other faculty members speak to each student involved. Parents are contacted and informed of the situation. The student may be asked to write a statement describing the events in question before parents are contacted. Refusal to make a written statement is itself considered a major infraction. In the event that there is evidence that a major school rule has been broken, the Resident Director or school administration may recommend a meeting of the disciplinary committee or forgo this in favor of a different disciplinary or non-disciplinary response. This decision is made solely by the Head of Schools and Programs and is not subject to appeal.

In the event that a discipline meeting is called, the committee, composed of faculty members, administrators, and, if appropriate, students, meets with the student to discuss the statement and clarify the facts of the case. Members of the committee then deliberate in the absence of the student and make a recommendation for action to SYA's Head of Schools and Programs. If for any reason the student is not able to meet with the disciplinary committee, the committee may meet without the student. Parents do not participate in any way in the process or deliberation by the school. The committee's recommendation is then given to the Head of Schools and Programs. The

response may include modification to student independence, placing the student on disciplinary probation, suspension or dismissal. Disciplinary committee outcomes will be communicated to the student and the student's parents, host parents and sending school by the Resident Director or Dean of Students. The decision is final.

For any disciplinary incident occurring immediately before a school vacation, the Resident Director, at his or her discretion, if approved by the Head of Schools and Programs, may require students involved in the incident to remain on site until such time as any required disciplinary proceedings are completed, regardless of student travel plans.

### **Search**

To maintain overall safety and security, SYA has the right to perform unannounced searches of students and their property at the school, school-related events and the host family. Further, SYA has the right to search student rooms at the host family residence and at hotels during school travel. Searches may be performed without notice, without consent and without a search warrant.

Regarding personal searches, a student's person or personal effects (e.g., backpack, purse, pockets) may be searched by a staff member to determine whether the student is in possession of contraband. All personal searches will be performed in a manner that is respectful of the norms of decency and the emotional maturity of the student. The search will be conducted in private, by a same-sex SYA employee, with another same-sex staff member present, and only after approval from the Head of Schools and Programs. The student's parents will be notified of the search as soon as reasonably possible. Under no circumstances will a body cavity or strip search be permitted unless conducted by law enforcement personnel. Refusal to submit to a search may result in disciplinary action.

### **Status Review**

On occasion, the Resident Director may determine that a student may not be able to succeed in SYA's personally demanding and academically rigorous program. Contributing factors may include ongoing adjustment issues, attendance problems, lack of academic progress, inability to take care of oneself appropriately or adequately, disciplinary concerns, and attitudinal or other behavioral issues as determined by the Resident Director and faculty.

In such cases, the Resident Director will meet with the student and his or her advisor and at least some of his or her faculty members. They may meet as part of a regularly-scheduled faculty meeting or separately. For documentation reasons, the Resident Director will ensure that notes are taken.

The purpose of the meeting is to proactively recognize an emerging issue or issues for the student in order to address them in ways that are in the best interest of the student, the student's parents and host families, and the SYA community, as determined by SYA. Action steps to be taken subsequent to reporting the meeting(s) may include: meeting with the student and/or the host family; phone conversations with parents and/or the student's sending school; referral to counseling, which may be required if available; referral to the DC if appropriate; behavioral contracts which can include

early curfew, loss of independent travel privileges, study hall, etc.; and return to student's home country for a medical and/or psychological assessment.

### **Immediate Removal**

In any situation involving an immediate threat to personal safety of any member of the SYA community or property, the Head of Schools and Programs may order the immediate removal of a student. Depending upon the facts of the case, the removal may be permanent or may be continued until such time as an appropriate fact-finding proceeding or hearing procedure or both can be arranged.

### **Departure**

It is SYA's policy that students who withdraw or are required to leave the program (whether suspended or expelled) return to their home country as soon as possible. The students are not permitted to remain with their host family, and their parent(s) is responsible for all travel expenses that result from the early departure.

### **Reporting of Disciplinary Infractions**

- Sending Schools: SYA keeps students' sending schools apprised of disciplinary infractions as deemed necessary and appropriate. In the case of a student appearing before the Discipline Committee (DC), however, SYA will provide the sending school with a formal letter outlining the case and the outcomes of the DC meeting.
- Colleges and Universities: SYA answers all questions from colleges and universities fully and honestly. In the case of a student returning to their sending school, it is the sending school college advisor who decides, according to sending school policies, when a disciplinary incident needs to be reported to colleges and universities, in the absence of a question requesting such information. In the case of a student not returning to their sending school and relying on the SYA College Counseling Liaison to serve the function as primary counselor, SYA policy is to report all suspensions that have resulted from serious integrity violations. Further, for seniors, all appearances before the Discipline Committee which result in the finding of misconduct will be reported to the colleges to which the student has applied, regardless of the time of year in which the appearance occurs.
- Transcript: If a student is dismissed from SYA, the transcript will indicate that the student was "required to withdraw" on the specific date. The transcript does not provide any further detail regarding the circumstances of dismissal.

*As a reminder, both students and parents will be asked to sign off  
on having read this Student-Parent Handbook.*

## APPENDIX A

### SYA Internet and Electronic Communications Usage Policy

The purpose of internet service at all SYA campuses is to provide educational opportunities for research and study and to give students reasonable means to stay in contact with family and friends. SYA discourages excessive use of social networks and prohibits:

- Any use of computers for illegal purposes or in support of illegal activities, including illegal music downloads.
- Any use for political or commercial purposes.
- Any use that disrupts the educational and administrative goals of SYA.
- Any use that is offensive or inconsiderate to SYA, students or faculty, host families or the host community.
- Copying academic papers from the internet or other plagiarism.
- Illegal copying of commercial software.
- Downloading, sending, creating or viewing inappropriate material, including but not limited to pornography, profanity, abusive language or statements, sexually explicit language or images, defamatory material of any kind, or threatening or harassing materials of any kind.
- Altering electronic communications to hide user's identity or impersonate another person.
- Invading the privacy of others.
- Downloading programs or documents onto hard drives without prior consent of the Resident Director.
- Downloading any non-school related materials as this interferes with necessary school functions on the school network.
- Any attempt to penetrate computer or network security of SYA, or to gain unauthorized access (or attempted access) to any other person or entity's computer, electronic accounts or equipment.
- Using SYA's electronic systems for unauthorized monitoring, logging, propagating viruses or transmitting spyware/malware.

Any infractions of the above are considered grounds for confiscating personal electronic devices and/or disciplinary action.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **SYA Social Media Comments and Participation Policy**

Comments to SYA-sponsored sites, such as blogs, online forms, etc., or social media sites, are welcome and encouraged; however, to promote respectful discussion within this forum, SYA requires users to be courteous and productive and avoid comments that are profane, obscene, offensive, sexually explicit, inappropriate, inflammatory or otherwise objectionable. Blogs often foster debate of an issue; users are to engage in such exchanges with mutual respect for others' opinions.

For the privacy of users and their families, please assume that all postings to SYA-sponsored sites will be publicly available on the internet and therefore publicly accessible without limitation or protection of any kind. Please consider how much personal information to share, with the understanding that this information may be linked to the user's name and published on the internet.

By posting a comment, video or any other material to SYA-sponsored sites as outlined above, users give SYA the irrevocable right and license to exercise all copyright, publicity, and moral rights with respect to any content provided, which includes using submissions for any purpose in any form and on any media, including but not limited to: displaying, modifying, reproducing, distributing, creating other works from, and publishing. SYA reserves the right to review all comments, videos and any other material before they are posted, and to edit them to preserve readability and to ensure that they are appropriate for other users.

SYA further reserves the right to reject or remove comments for any reason, including but not limited to belief that the comments violate this policy, and to determine in its sole discretion which submissions meet its qualifications for posting. Any submissions that fail to follow this policy in any way or are otherwise irrelevant will be removed.

SYA also reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time to address issues that may arise and changes in SYA operations or the law.

In posting material on SYA-sponsored sites,  
users agree not to:

- Post material that SYA determines is threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, slanderous or hostile towards any individual or entity.
- Post phone numbers, email addresses or other confidential information of students, faculty or any other person other than oneself. If users choose to post their own contact information for any reason, they should be aware that the information will be available to the public and is, therefore, subject to misuse.
- Post material that infringes on the rights of SYA or any individual or entity, including privacy,

intellectual property or publication rights.

- Post material that promotes or advertises a commercial product or solicits business or membership or financial or other support in any business, group or organization except those that are officially sponsored by SYA, except in designated areas specifically marked for this purpose.
- Post chain letters, post the same comment multiple times, or otherwise distribute “spam” via the SYA-sponsored site.
- Allow any other individual or entity to use their identification for posting or viewing comments.
- Post comments under multiple names or through use of another’s name.

SYA reserves the right to enforce any or all of the following:

- Ban future posts from people who repeatedly violate this policy. SYA may affect such bans by refusing posts from specific email addresses or IP addresses, or through other means as necessary.
- Remove or edit comments at any time, whether or not they violate this policy.
- Enforce disciplinary measures should students violate any part of this policy.

The user agrees to indemnify and hold harmless SYA, its affiliates, directors, employees, successors and assigns against any damages, losses, liabilities, judgments, causes of action, costs or expenses (including reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs) arising out of any claim by a third party relating to any material user has posted on SYA-sponsored sites.

By posting a comment or material of any kind on an SYA-sponsored site, the user hereby agrees to the policy set forth above.

#### Creating and maintaining official SYA social networking sites

All “official” SYA social networking sites should adhere to the following standard. Sites that accept comments or postings by anyone other than the site administrator must be diligently monitored to ensure that information displayed fits within SYA guidelines and is appropriate to the subject matter of the page.

#### Student use of social media

First and foremost, students are encouraged to always exercise the utmost caution when participating in any form of social media or online communications, both within the SYA community and beyond.

Students who participate in online interactions must remember that their posts reflect on the entire SYA community and, as such, are subject to the specific behavioral standards.

Students are expected to abide by the following:

- Students may not use social media sites or messaging to publish disparaging or harassing remarks about SYA community members including but not limited to faculty, staff, other students and members of host families.
- Students who choose to post editorial content to websites or other forms of online media must ensure that their submission does not reflect poorly upon SYA.
- It is highly recommended that students adjust their Facebook settings to the highest level of privacy to prevent public viewing of potentially hurtful and/or incriminatory remarks.

Failure to abide by this policy, as with other SYA policies, may result in disciplinary action.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SYA Medication Management Policy**

#### **Prescription Medication**

School Year Abroad (SYA) requires that parents provide complete information on their child's medical history and allow access to all of the student's medical records. SYA also requires parents to notify the school of any changes in the student's medical file, including new diagnoses or prescription medicine, at any time from enrollment through completion of the school year. Parents must disclose all controlled substances prescribed to their children. Students found to be in possession of undisclosed prescription medication will be in violation of the school's discipline code. Medication prescribed to a student is for that individual only. Students found to be providing others with prescription medication face immediate dismissal from the program. In the case of controlled or psychotropic medications, please note that while SYA will dispense as per doctor's instructions, neither SYA faculty and staff nor host families are trained to provide adequate monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of newly-prescribed medications or significant changes in dosage.

If a child is prescribed medication, parents must fill out the Medication Authorization form to provide SYA with the following:

- a. Permission for use of the medication
- b. Dosage amount
- c. Reason for prescription
- d. Any other important information about side effects, storage temperature, etc.

In addition, the prescribing physician must fill out the prescription medication section of the Physician's Examination / Immunization Record that provides SYA with the following:

- a. Permission for use of the medication (including its generic name), the dosage amount and the indications.
- b. A list of potential substitutes that may be obtained abroad should the U.S. medication not be available and a substitute be required.
- c. Recommendations for medical follow-up, if any, while abroad.

#### **Dispensing and Distribution**

Medications will be stored and distributed in the following manner

#### Controlled and Psychotropic Prescription Medications

Students taking daily doses of controlled or psychotropic medications will be allowed to keep with them a seven-day supply, distributed weekly. Vacation periods and extended travel may necessitate the distribution of more than a seven-day supply. The school administration will securely store and dispense the medication.

### “As Needed” Medications

Students will only be allowed to have one dose of a controlled or psychotropic medication prescribed “as needed.” The host family will also be provided one dose in case of urgent need. The remaining medication will be stored by the school administration. Students should ask the school administration for a replacement dose as needed.

### Non-Controlled, Non-Psychotropic Prescription Medications

Students will be allowed to keep and self-dispense non-controlled and non-psychotropic medications. Examples include topical creams, oral antibiotics, oral allergy medications, oral contraceptives, asthma inhalers, epinephrine auto-injectors and insulin. All medication must be transported in its original packaging with the appropriate prescription label attached.

### **Discontinuation of Prescription Medication**

Parents must notify the appropriate RD, in writing, immediately should the decision be made for student to discontinue use of a controlled and/or psychotropic prescription medication. It is important to note that neither SYA faculty and staff nor host families are trained to provide adequate monitoring and evaluation of the withdrawal process from medication.

### **Failure to Comply**

Failure to comply with the policies and procedures outlined above is forbidden by the school rules presented in the Discipline Philosophy and Procedures. The sale, sharing or other distribution of prescription drugs, as well as accepting such drugs from others, is expressly forbidden. Students who misuse prescription drugs in any way are liable for dismissal from School Year Abroad (SYA).

## **APPENDIX D**

### **SYA Athletic Activities Permission & Guidelines**

School Year Abroad (SYA) students are allowed to ride bicycles, swim, and engage in other athletic activities only if their parents have signed and returned to SYA the *Athletic Activities Permissions & Release of Responsibility* document sent under separate cover.

Bicycling: Driving or riding motorized cycles of any kind is not permitted under any circumstances.

SYA students who ride a bicycle to school, as a sport or for recreational purposes in town or on excursions will find that cycling in China or Europe may be quite different from what they may be familiar with at home. Automobile traffic density and speed, narrow streets and tight margins on the roads can make riding a challenge. The rich tradition of cycling in all SYA countries means that motorists are usually aware of riders and responsible bicycle riding reduces risk. But even the most careful rider cannot eliminate the possibility of an accident or injury, nor is there any guarantee that every road will be free of hazards. In considering whether to permit your child to bicycle while abroad, you should consider your child's level of training and experience in bicycling and if necessary seek training for her/him prior to riding abroad.

In considering whether or not to give your child permission to use a bicycle while at SYA, you will need to consider the question of helmets. There is no doubt that helmets make bicycling much safer. Some jurisdictions may even require the use of helmets or other safety equipment. SYA requires students and faculty to comply with local laws regarding the use of such safety equipment and strongly encourages the use of helmets even when not legally required. We expect that you will have discussed this important safety topic with your child and persuaded your daughter/son to wear a helmet whenever riding a bicycle. In European countries, use of helmets is an accepted practice; however, in China tens of thousands of Chinese who commute on bicycles don't wear them. An American student wearing a helmet looks even more unusual. Your son or daughter will be able to purchase a helmet in every SYA country if he or she intends to buy a bicycle; however, he or she may also choose to bring a helmet from home.

In all countries, and especially in China, with teenager's sensitivity to looking out of place, we have found it impossible to ensure that SYA students use helmets when they ride their bikes even when we require them to do so. There is inherent risk to bicycling, in particular in or near motor vehicle traffic. The risk includes serious injury or death and is made worse by not wearing a helmet. SYA cannot enforce the use of helmets as we cannot be everywhere at once; therefore, we cannot accept responsibility for ensuring that your child wears a helmet.

Swimming: Opportunities for swimming (both indoors and outside) also occur during the year, either during SYA-sponsored trips and excursions, with host families, or on the students' own free time. During SYA-sponsored trips and excursions, students (with parental permission to swim) may

only swim during specified times and at specified places, as authorized by an SYA staff member. At all times, whether under SYA's supervision or not, students swim AT THEIR OWN RISK, and the following two rules always apply: students must never swim alone and must never swim outdoors at night.

Other Athletic Activities: Engaging in strenuous, challenging, and competitive athletic activities is part of the culture in all SYA countries. Therefore, opportunities for students to engage in these athletic activities also occur during the year. These activities may include, but are not limited to, organized team sports of all kinds, as well as skiing, hiking, rafting, fencing, martial arts, etc. They may be sponsored or monitored by SYA staff, or the students (with parental permission) may be allowed to engage in these activities independently. At all times, whether under SYA's supervision or not, students engage in these activities AT THEIR OWN RISK and will be expected to follow the stated rules of the given venue regarding use of safety equipment and fair play. All of these activities are potentially dangerous activities and involve inherent risks of serious injury, death, and/or property damage.

Sanctions: Even if parental permission is given, SYA reserves the right to restrict and/or prohibit participation in any of the activities described above as a result of inappropriate or unsafe actions by any student, and to impose additional disciplinary action, as SYA deems appropriate and necessary in accordance with its discipline policy.



## **APPENDIX E**

### **SYA Independent Travel**

#### STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT, ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ASSUMPTION OF RISKS AND RELEASE FROM LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION

*This represents the policies presented in the document by the same name, sent under separate cover, for parent and student signatures.*

Independent travel is the opportunity to travel outside the host city unaccompanied by host parents or SYA faculty. It can lead to a greater immersion in the host country culture, increased language proficiency and a furthering of the student's educational goals. It is an earned privilege, not a right. Students who are in good academic standing, working toward mastery of the host country's language, sufficiently connected with their host family and able to make healthy and appropriate decisions when engaged in independent activities may earn the privilege to travel independently.

Permission to travel independently requires the approval of the Resident Director, signed permission from parents or guardians and signed acknowledgement from the student of their plans and responsibilities. These forms and procedures must be repeated for each independent travel request. This document is not a permission form for independent travel, but rather a reference for parents and students regarding the risks and responsibilities involved with engaging in independent travel, as well as the allocation of those risks.

Parent and student acknowledge that they understand:

- SYA's independent travel policies and procedures and that they had the opportunity to ask questions and obtain additional information about independent travel at SYA.
- Students are required to follow all of the rules and requirements set forth in the independent travel documents and that their failure to do so may result in dismissal from SYA, requiring them to return home at the parent's expense.
- Participation in independent travel involves risks not necessarily found in study at SYA's sending schools, including risks involved in traveling in more remote areas of foreign countries; foreign political, legal, social and economic conditions; different social standards and mores; different standards of design, safety, and maintenance of buildings, public spaces, and conveyances; differences in the reliability of public transportation; local safety, medical, and weather conditions; unpredictable exposure to criminal or negligent acts of others; and other additional risks of which neither SYA, the Resident Director, nor the parent nor the student are aware.
- Permission for the student to participate is based upon parent's belief that s/he has the physical and mental ability, maturity and self-confidence to be able to travel independently and to make responsible and appropriate decisions about his/her behavior and to respond appropriately to the unexpected challenges which s/he might encounter while traveling independently in the foreign country.

- The above-mentioned risks may increase significantly if the student or his/her travel companions engage in drinking, drug use or other risky behavior while on independent travel.
- SYA's expectation that parents and students discuss these risks together.
- The dangers associated with such behavior and that such behavior will, even if no physical harm comes to the student, jeopardize his/her future participation in the SYA program as described above.
- Neither SYA nor the host family will be responsible for chaperoning the student when s/he is engaged in independent travel.
- Independent travel at SYA is voluntary, not required.
- The rules and regulations of SYA apply to students while engaged in independent travel just as they would if the students remained in the host city.
- Safe independent travel requires exercising good judgment and that the student is responsible for his/her own actions and behavior, including but not limited to complying with local law.

By signing that they have read and understood the above policy, parents hereby release, waive, discharge and agree to hold harmless SYA, its trustees, officers, agents, employees, representatives, and volunteers (referred to as the "Releasees") from any and all liability arising out of or in connection with student's engaging in independent travel.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **SYA Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy**

#### Healthy relationship and boundaries introduction

SYA educates all community members about healthy relationships and boundaries and seeks to empower victims and bystanders to come forward if misconduct occurs.

SYA promotes freedom of expression; this freedom implies a responsibility to respect the rights of others. Conduct that diminishes, exploits or abuses another's position or personal worth is not acceptable, and harassment in any form is not tolerated.

#### Declaration on harassment and discrimination

SYA is committed to providing a supportive academic and host family environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive, including sexual harassment. At SYA respect for the rights of all, and for the differences among us, is essential.

#### Definition of harassment and discrimination

Harassment is defined as any written, verbal or physical conduct, including electronic forms of communication, which denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of the individual's race, color, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability or veteran status. Harassment seriously interferes with the school's goal of creating an atmosphere in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity and will not be tolerated.

#### Definition of sexual harassment

A form of harassment, sexual harassment, is defined as unwanted sexual advances, requests or demands for sexual favors, or visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser.

#### Reporting

SYA encourages students to talk to somebody about what happened – so they can get the support they may need, and so that SYA may respond appropriately. If a member of the SYA community experiences or witnesses harassment or discrimination, they must report it immediately to the Resident Director. If the Resident Director is unavailable or the person reporting believes it would be inappropriate to contact the Resident Director, they should immediately contact an advisor or the Head of Schools and Programs. Students can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

### Investigation

All allegations of sexual harassment will be promptly investigated and followed by an appropriate corrective action and/or disciplinary response as necessary. The investigation may involve separate interviews with both parties, and each may bring a person of their choosing to accompany them in the interview. Remedial measures may be taken to limit the effects of the alleged harassment or misconduct and prevent its recurrence. Care will be taken to protect the identity of the person with the complaint and of the accused party or parties, as much as is reasonably possible while successfully investigating and taking appropriate responsive action.

When an investigation is complete, the findings will be shared in writing with both the complainant and the accused. SYA reserves the right to take whatever disciplinary actions deemed appropriate including but not limited to: warning, probation, weekend activity and independent travel restrictions, reflection assignment, suspension, dismissal, etc. A student may also be referred for a counseling assessment.

### Retaliation

Retaliation against any individual who reports harassment and/or discrimination or who cooperates in an investigation of harassment and/or discrimination will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.

### False Accusation

It is a violation of this policy for anyone to willfully make false allegations of harassment or sexual harassment and discrimination. False accusation is considered both “dishonesty” and “offensive behavior” and is in violation of at least two major school rules.