Overview

Welcome to the VIU Education Abroad Blogging team!

We are thrilled to have you onboard to share your experiences with fellow students as well as friends, family, faculty and VIU partners. You have embarked on an intensive, inspiring and often life-changing experience and are taking the path less travelled and the world needs to hear about it!

This is our opportunity to celebrate your experience and share your learning with a larger community that cannot begin to imagine all of the activities VIU students contribute to internationally without the help of your stories. And this is your opportunity to share your stories with an audience who is keen to hear about it all.

Getting Started

Before you start writing, please read these guidelines carefully, and read recent issues of the Education Abroad Blog (https://international.viu.ca/education-abroad/blog) to get a feel for the work you’ll be contributing to. Consider the audience, the tone and ways that you can entice readers today and years from now to click on your story headline and become immersed in your words.

Our Audience: The Education Abroad Blog is for people interested in exploring the world through VIU (including probably your parents and professors!). Our audience includes everyone from high school students who may read these stories when they are considering where and what they can study in university, to current VIU students, their parents and friends (as well as yours), VIU advisors and professors and our national and international partners.

Our Voice: Write in first person, using your own voice and tell your personal story as creatively as you can muster. If you want to tell it in a rhyme or rap, go for it! Be creative, and just ensure you keep with the overall tone.

Our Tone: We’re all scholars here. We’re out in the world to learn, and this is a huge privilege! While we’re often fun, youthful and witty, we are always humble, thoughtful in our reflections, respectful of diverse perspectives. We don’t perpetuate stereotypes or fall into common social media traps that can impact the dignity and privacy of our host communities and colleagues, particularly in the developing world.
Tone & Content Checklist
To check that your work is in keeping with these goals: (Adapted from RadiAid Checklist)

☐ Ask yourself: “What is my intention with sharing this post?”
☐ Is your post informative, educational or inspiring? When creating posts or blogs for VIU Education Abroad, avoid posting personal pictures or comments that have little or nothing to do with your VIU educational experience abroad.
☐ Ensure you have consent from any person or organization identified in the post or photo (tip: Children can’t give consent, so avoid photos that identify children’s faces).
☐ Avoid sweeping and simplified generalizations, include informative text with names, places, background, etc.
☐ Be respectful of different cultures and traditions.
☐ Ask yourself: “Would I have appreciated to be portrayed in the same manner?”
☐ Avoid sensitive, vulnerable situations and locations such as hospitals and health clinics.
☐ Don’t portray yourself as the hero in the story.
☐ Conclude with a question, thought-provoking action or thoughtful reflection.
☐ Challenge the perceptions, bring down stereotypes!
☐ Find ways to bring your story back to our ultimate purpose as scholars: Learning.
☐ Check in that your content covers the 4 principles of the resource “How To Communicate the World: A Social Media Guide for Volunteers and Travellers” by RadiAid.

Finally, Your Task: To draft an outline, check in with us for suggestions and proceed to craft an engaging 500 word blog post, along with an interesting headline, suggested tags that connect to your topics, high quality photo and signed waiver(s) from yourself and anyone else pictured. Typically, our contributors commit to submitting a minimum of 2 blog posts, exploring more than one topic of their experience.

Crafting Your Brilliant Ideas

What makes a good article? Good articles inform and motivate the reader about a particular topic or issue through a well-told story. Sometimes they are creative in their approach, sometimes short and to the point.

It’s easy to forget this part, but in addition to a focus topic, a well-told story MUST include a beginning, middle and an end. It should be a combination of entertainment, and nuts and bolts how-to information. It helps to include details about the author (you), the location (your host country, community, organization/school) and when possible, include reliable sources (ie. pin to a google map of where you were, links to partner websites, quotes, images … the list goes on).
Multimedia:

We know that people learn in different ways, so we encourage diverse contributions to the blog!

Photos: Each contribution must include at least one high quality photo. You must have permission and collect and submit a signed waiver from any identifiable people, in addition to one from you.

Videos: Contributors are welcome to create a vlog (video blog). Include a script and share it with us for feedback and possible editing before proceeding with recording. Submit the final piece, include a headline and 50-word summary to introduce it.

FileSize: Files must be less than 100 MB. Allowed file types: jpg jpeg gif png txt doc docx xls xlsx pdf ppt pptx pps ppsx odt ods odp mp3 mov mp4 m4a m4v mpeg avi ogg oga ogv weba webp webm zip tgz gz key dotx.

Tags: To help readers find your story, provide us with some suggested tags (aka categories) that are connected to your program, destination and topics. Examples are:

Program Tags:
- QES (Queen Elizabeth Scholars)
- Exchange
- Field School
- Internship

Topic Tags:
- Culture
- Packing
- Learning
- Resilience
- Funding

Destination Tags:
- UK
- Germany
- Belize

Helpful Ways to Start:

Try asking and answering a question about your experience. Here are some helpful prompts:

1) What are you learning about yourself?
2) What are you learning about the issue you are studying or working on?
3) What are you learning about the world?
4) What themes keep coming up?
5) Consider practical tips that future students could benefit from.
6) Consider your experience from the point it was merely an idea, to your future self, and anywhere in between.
How to Submit Your Blog

**Draft**
First, submit a summary of your story idea and outline for approval and suggestions to educationabroad@viu.ca. There may be some back and forth between us until a final draft is complete.

**Final Submission**
Submit a package, including the following by email to EducationAbroad@viu.ca or USB dropped off to VIU Education Abroad, Building 255

a. Your Story
  i. **Text blog posts:**
     1. Word document
        a. Include a suggested headline
        b. Sign off with your full name, VIU Major, Education Abroad program, major and host destination in your post.
        c. Include suggested tags
     2. Include high resolution feature photo(s)
        a. (Smart phone photos are generally acceptable).
     3. Include signed waiver(s)

  ii. **Video blogs or podcasts.**
    1. Script and share it with us for feedback and possible editing before proceeding with recording.
    2. Submit the final piece, include a headline and 50-word summary to introduce it.
    3. Include signed waiver(s)

Contributions will be edited for grammar, clarity and appropriate content. There may be some back and forth between us until a final draft is complete.

**Publishing**

Once ready for publishing, we may post your story to the VIU Education Abroad Blog Platform (website) and it may be shared it through our various social media channels.

Once published, please also share via your Facebook/Instagram/Blog and tag us with the hashtag #VIUAbroad. Keep a copy in your personal portfolio for reference in job interviews, grad school applications and family reunions (as you see fit).

The main VIU Social Media sites may also share your contributions … something to be particularly proud of!