Sexual Harassment and Assault
The Study Abroad Center considers sexual harassment and sexual assault to be an issue of safety. Your safety is vital to having a positive, successful study abroad experience. Therefore, we share the following to inform and invite you to critically consider how you can reduce your risk of harassment or assault.

Misperceptions host nationals may have about North American women and men
People around the world watch movies. Without context, others can easily make assumptions that all women are sexually active and want sex. Relationships with men can be seen as a ticket to the United States. While not universally true, stereotypes and assumptions do exist and need to be talked about and understood, not just considered an elephant in the room.
Unfortunately, we have had students who have been harassed or assaulted while studying abroad. Thankfully, it is not common, but we know that many situations are not reported to us.
Harassment or assault experiences reported include:
Catcalls or remarks from a distance while out in public. Some students have been approached on the street for conversation with suggestive comments.
Physical groping in a crowded space, such as a bar or concert.
Host family extended family member offering a ride and, instead, taking a student to a hotel, followed by rape.
Student leaving a bar with a host national and allowing that person to return to the student's apartment or dorm, with unwanted and uninvited sexual consequences.
Date rape drugs served by a bartender (paid off by someone) and waking up in a strange place hours later.
We are talking about someone else’s behavior here, so if something DOES happen to you, remember: It is not your fault. That said, we offer some suggestions that we hope might reduce your risk of this happening to you.

Communicate clearly
Given that you will not be automatically aware of cultural cues or meanings, communication can be a challenge. Sending a clear message is impaired by use of a second or third language. Consider asking a classmate or host family sibling for clarification of social norms and dating behavior.
If you find yourself in a situation in which you feel threatened or uncomfortable, speak firmly and clearly, even physically move away if the behavior continues.
Some cultures consider catcalls and inappropriate touching as a recreational sport. While such behavior may not be condoned, it is not punished either. Ignore inappropriate remarks and walk away.

Be safe
We hope you make good decisions, though we encourage you to consider abstaining from sex. If you do decide to engage in sex, be sure to use a condom.
If you choose to drink, remember to:
Watch while your drink is poured.
Carry your drink with you, even when going to a restroom.
Never overindulge.
Make sure you are with friends (“buddy system”).
See that everyone gets home safely.

If you start to feel nauseated after taking a drink, tell a trusted friend immediately. DO NOT go anywhere with a stranger, as you may have been slipped a date rape drug.

**Talk to us**

We cannot stress enough how important it is to report these behaviors to a local program director or to the Study Abroad Center so that we can take appropriate measures to reduce the risk of something happening to other participants. Feelings of guilt after more serious events are common, but please let us know so we can help you get the support you need and deserve. Know before you go (and ask again when you arrive):

- Gender roles and stereotypes?
- Harassment issues?
- Places that are unsafe?
- Prevalence of date rape drugs?
- STDs, HIV, contraception: things I should know about my site?

Resources for dealing with sexual harassment are found on the ISU website at http://www.dso.iastate.edu/sexualmisconduct/