SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Cultural norms vary as to what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior. You cannot assume that behavior that is considered acceptable in the US will be viewed similarly abroad. Suggestive catcalling and aggressive advances by men in social situations might be the norm in some locations. How you deal with these situations and how you behave generally can increase or decrease your risk of sexual assault.

Being informed, exercising good judgment and taking appropriate precautions can reduce the risk of sexual assault. Talk with your Program Director and do some research about cultural norms as they relate to dating. It is important to know that North American women are often stereotyped as being promiscuous and this may be reinforced in the minds of some men by styles of dress and the general friendliness of US women. In some countries, the concept of date rape is almost unknown and behavior prior to an assault may be viewed as more important than the number of times the woman says no. There is no 100% way to prevent sexual assault, but to reduce the odds of sexual assault – follow these guidelines:

• Remain sober – this allows you to both judge situations and react if needed.

• Dress conservatively

• Employ the buddy system (its always good to have friends watching out for you)

• Take care of yourself on a date: Be prepared to pay your own way, have access to a phone, arrange for transportation, and consider dressing in a way that allows you to move freely and quickly

• Make your intentions clear

• Trust your instincts - listen your inner voice and act on it

• Ask yourself, "Am I able to say 'no'"? And "Am I comfortable with what is happening?"

• If you don't like what someone is doing, you can reject the activity without rejecting the person

• Get out of the situation as soon as you sense danger or feel afraid

• To avoid stranger rape, try to walk on well-lighted streets: avoid doorways

• Look confident and strong and ignore inappropriate remarks from strangers

• If an assault is attempted, resist if you can, yelling, hitting, and then finding an escape

• If something does happen, remember that it is not your fault, no matter what you did or didn’t do, and that it is the perpetrator’s fault.

Remember that you are not alone, so seek help from your Program Director or a responsible person at the host institution. If you are living with a family and feel uncomfortable, request a new housing assignment from the program sponsor. If you feel your concerns are not being taken seriously, contact the ISU Study Abroad Center and we will contact the program sponsor.

Incidents involving other ISU students should be reported to the Program Director. If the incident involves an ISU employee, you should seek assistance from another ISU faculty or member of staff traveling with you and or contact the Study Abroad Center.