



Palazzo Rucellai
Parents' Guide
for
Study Abroad

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai

Parents' Guide for Study Abroad

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1. Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to you and want you to know that it is our goal to make your student's sojourn in Florence the best experience it can possibly be. Our dedicated staff provides each student with individual attention to help make their semester in Florence safe, memorable and enriching.

A semester abroad can at times seem intimidating, perhaps even overwhelming. At Palazzo Rucellai we are committed to aiding your family as it embarks on this exciting adventure.

In order to make the transition ahead as smooth as possible, we've prepared the following information as a guide for parents. For more in-depth information we encourage parents to read the Pre-departure Handbook, the Student Conduct Code, and all other information sent to the student, as well as to take a careful look at our website, www.palazzorucellai.org. We also encourage you to contact us with any questions you may have.

Program Goals

The educational mission and goals of the Institute are:

- to offer language study and cultural immersion in the host country;
- to expand the intellectual horizons of our students and to help them gain perspective on their own society and culture by understanding the way of life in other cultural contexts;
- to expose students to the different approaches to learning and studying in the host country;
- to enhance cross-cultural understanding;
- to provide essential preparation and skills (especially tolerance of difference, adaptability, and flexibility) for careers that increasingly require international experience;
- to foster students' self-awareness and development at a critically important age and, thus, to contribute towards making them global citizens.

2. Palazzo Rucellai Contact Information

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai

Via della Vigna Nuova, 18

50123 Florence, ITALY

Tel: (+39) 055-264-5910 (from the U.S. dial 011-39-055-264-5910)

Fax: (+39) 055-264-6721 (" 011-39-055-264-6721)

Email: info@palazzorucellai.org

Contacting Your Student

Student apartments do not have fixed-line phones, so it is essential for each student to have a cell phone while they are in Italy. We require them to have one for security reasons. We furnish all the necessary information to rent a phone; the details can be found in your student's pre-departure book. Cell phone numbers are usually 10-digits long and usually start with the number 3. To call from the States you would dial 011-39-cell phone number.

If you need to contact your student in Italy and it is not an emergency, e-mail is the easiest and least expensive way to do so. Otherwise, you may call a student directly on his/her cell phone. Text messages may also be sent to students' cell phones. When attempting to reach your child, it is best to call the Institute only after your repeated attempts to reach the student have failed. In

those cases, although the staff at the Institute may not be able to reach your student immediately, we will leave a message in their mailbox or, if there is an emergency, we will do our best to locate them as quickly as possible.

Remember that to call Italy from the United States, you must first dial 011 (for international), then 39 (for Italy), then the number you are dialing. Therefore, to call the Institute, you would dial 011-39-055-264-5910

It is usually most economical to use a calling card or to arrange a special plan with your telephone provider. There are special calling cards to call Italy. An internet search will provide sources for calling cards. You can also use an internet phone service like Skype or a messenger program like Yahoo or Microsoft messenger.

Mailing Packages

Families should avoid sending packages to students unless their contents are urgently necessary. Packages frequently take much longer than expected to arrive, and often incur hefty customs charges. To avoid these charges, or to minimize them, it is advisable to declare a value of less than 50 US Dollars and write in large block letters on the outside of the package **“PERSONAL ITEMS – NO COMMERCIAL VALUE.”** Do not write "vitamins" or "medicine" on the package.

All necessary mail and packages should be sent to the Institute and NOT to the student's housing. The address should be written **exactly** as shown below (don't move the postal code around, and be careful about the proper spelling):

STUDENT'S NAME
c/o The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai
Via della Vigna Nuova, 18
50123 Florence
ITALY

3. Health and Safety

Health and safety are our first concerns. All students are given contact numbers for the staff who can be reached 24-hours a day in case of an emergency.

Medical Services in Florence

Students are provided with the contact information of a private medical service with a staff of English speaking doctors. This service has walk-in hours Monday through Friday for non-urgent medical needs, and also provides a 24-hour emergency service. They also have an arrangement with HTH Worldwide health insurance, which many of our students use. This means the student can see a doctor and the service will bill the insurance company directly. The service includes a variety of specialists and will arrange any necessary diagnostic tests or hospital stays.

Palazzo Rucellai also has a reference list of other English speaking doctors. Medications prescribed by these doctors can be acquired at a local pharmacy. Students should keep the receipt to submit to their insurance provider. Many insurance companies cover doctors' visits; you should check to see if yours does.

If the ailment is not serious enough to warrant a visit to the doctor, students may choose to go directly to a pharmacy (*farmacia*) and may obtain over-the-counter medicine suggested by the pharmacist.

It is strongly advised to bring from home favorite common cold remedies and

allergy medications.

If your son or daughter takes prescription medication for a chronic ailment, he/she should bring enough medication to last the semester. Some prescription drugs that are common in the U.S. are not approved for use in Italy. Any prescription medication that your student carries with them to Italy must be accompanied by your physician's written description of the medical problem, the dose of the medication and the generic name(s).

If your child has any medical or psychological condition that may require attention from a physician or psychiatrist during their stay in Italy, they should prepare an adequate summary of the details so they may be properly treated. One copy of this should be carried with the student; one copy should be left with a parent or guardian.

Students should also inform us BEFORE their arrival of any special needs, including dietary restrictions, physical problems, learning disabilities, allergies or strict religious observances. It is much easier for us to help if we know about special needs ahead of time.

Safety

In light of current events in the world, it is more important than ever for students to remember that they are guests in a foreign country.

Being safe is often a CHOICE. Students risk their own safety by walking alone at night, by drinking excessively, or by letting down their guard too easily with strangers. Such behavior can bring harm to themselves and to those around them. It is essential for students to assume responsibility for their own safety and to remember that the decisions they make on a day-to-day basis can have a major impact on their own well-being while abroad.

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai, through its collaborating universities, is a member of AACUPI - the Association of American Colleges and University Programs in Italy - and maintains regular contact with the US Consulate in Florence and Embassy in Rome. All communications provided by the Embassy, including public announcements and travel warnings, will be promptly communicated to students.

Travel Information Forms

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai has both online and paper versions of an Independent Travel Form which students must complete if they plan to travel outside Florence for an overnight stay. By knowing the whereabouts of the students, the Institute can more readily reach them while they are traveling. It also enables us to provide you with up-to-date information on where your student is and how s/he can be reached in case of an emergency.

Emergency Services at Palazzo Rucellai

Upon arrival, students are given an Institute student ID, which lists the Institute emergency number, as well as general emergency numbers (fire, ambulance, police, etc.) We encourage students to carry this card with them at all times and also to memorize Institute numbers in their cell phones. At all times, one or more members of the Palazzo Rucellai staff are available to help students with emergencies. At night and on weekends, there is a specified Palazzo Rucellai staff member on call to handle student emergencies.

We encourage students and their families to discuss and establish a contact

system that can be used in the event of a crisis on either side of the Atlantic. In most crisis situations, parents should attempt to contact their child first before they attempt to contact staff at Palazzo Rucellai. The Institute does its best to know where students are, but it is also the responsibility of the students to inform the Institute and their families of their travel destinations.

4. Money Matters

The euro is the official currency of fifteen of the member states of the European Union. This means that you will be able to buy your pizza in Naples and your crepes in Paris with the same money - no more exchanging or dealing with multiple currencies and exchange rates.

A convenient website for finding the current exchange rate is www.xe.com.

Euro Coins

There are eight euro coins:

€2.00 €1.00 €0.50 €0.20 €0.10 €0.05 €0.02 €0.01

Euro Banknotes

There are seven euro banknotes, each one of them is a different color, and their size increases with their value.

€5 €10 €20 €50 €100 €200 €500

It is suggested that students have access to the following means of obtaining cash:

ATM Bank/Debit card

ATM's are the most convenient and most popular method for obtaining cash. The rate of exchange is very favorable and networks are safe and reliable. Usually you can withdraw the equivalent of \$250 per day, which is more than enough for daily financial needs. Be sure to check how much your bank charges for overseas ATM withdrawals.

If your student's bankcard also acts as a Visa or MasterCard, it can be used for purchases at most stores and shops. However, the bank account in the U.S. is debited immediately and often a small surcharge is added for exchange rates. **You should notify your bank that the card will be used abroad**, since banks sometimes block unusual or foreign) withdrawals.

Note: ATM cards must be linked to a checking account only. Use only a 4-6 digit pin because some machines do not accept longer entries.

Traveler's checks

This is still the safest method for carrying large sums of money into a foreign country. Students should remember to keep the numbered receipts separate and make a photocopy of the receipts for someone at home to keep safe. It is best to exchange traveler's checks at a bank (or at the American Express office if they are American Express checks, to save on fees). Having a few on hand will allow for quick and emergency access to cash. Money exchange shops generally charge very high fees. Passports are necessary for identification when changing traveler's checks.

Credit Cards

For cash advances (with PIN number), larger purchases, and emergencies, the Visa and MasterCard credit cards are widely accepted. Purchases for items such as trips, clothes, gifts are best done with a credit card. It is safe and the monthly statement itemizes spending. **Be aware that very high interest rates are charged for cash advances obtained with a credit card.**

\$150 worth of Euro in cash

Your student should arrive in Italy with some Euro's (\$150 - \$200 worth or so) so that they can make small purchases immediately upon arrival: a quick bite to eat, some groceries, or other incidentals. One shouldn't rely on changing money or finding ATM machines immediately upon arrival. See further information below about expenses following arrival.

Students will also need about €75 during Orientation to pay the fees for the legally required permit of stay.

Personal Information File

The Personal Information File is a file the student should create before departure which contains copies of important documents that should be left with you. These documents are for both legal and financial purposes.

Items to include in this file are everything that would need to be replaced if a wallet were stolen, as well as:

- A copy of the pre-departure handbook.
- A copy of: Insurance letter, Financial Support letter, photocopy of passport, photocopy of visa.
- Personal bank information including account names and numbers.
- Credit card information including account names and numbers, and photocopies of credit and debit cards.
- Telephone numbers for lost or stolen ATM and credit cards.
- Names and phone numbers of student's dean and academic advisor at home institute.
- Social security number.

In an emergency situation, your student should be able to contact the person to whom they have entrusted this file at home, so they will be able to obtain the information needed.

Sending Money from Home

Recommended:

- It's recommended that students give their checking account information to family members or trusted third parties so that money can be deposited directly into their account if necessary. The funds can then be directly accessed with their ATM card.
- American Express Gift Checks or American Express Money Orders are efficient ways to send money since the family or friend can purchase checks made out in the student's name. Students can cash the check at the local American Express office. You do not have to be an American Express cardholder or member to obtain this service.

Not Recommended:

- It is illegal to send cash through the mail; this includes Federal Express and other private carriers.
- Personal checks, International money orders or International Checks cannot be cashed unless one has a personal account in an Italian bank.
- **WIRING MONEY HAS COSTLY TRANSFER FEES** and may take much longer than expected to arrive.

Expenses Upon Arrival

The first few days of registration and Orientation require an initial outlay of money. Any Institute items such as textbooks, site visit fees, and optional excursions can be paid for by credit card. Although larger stores accept credit cards, many smaller shops will require cash. Students should be prepared for the following expenses in the first days upon arrival:

Groceries/Incidentals (cash)

Students will want to purchase some groceries upon arrival so that they do not have to pay for restaurants or fast food. Groceries may be purchased from the local shops in the neighborhood. Students often forget that a part of living in an apartment in the city includes venturing off to “survive” by buying immediate necessities.

Purchase of Textbooks (credit cards accepted)

Students can expect to spend \$150-\$300 on textbooks, depending on the courses selected. Since books in English need to be shipped “abroad,” and orders are placed well in advance for timely arrival, the Institute has made a commitment for them on your behalf. Therefore, all students are required to purchase the textbooks that are assigned by their professors.

Credit cards or cash in euro will be accepted as payment. Whenever possible, used copies may be re-sold to the Institute at the end of the semester.

Excursion Sign-Up (credit cards accepted)

Optional day trips organized by the Institute cost approximately \$50 (dollars). See the Travel while in Italy section for additional information. Credit cards or cash in euro will be accepted as payment.

Site Visit Fees (credit cards accepted)

Some courses require fees for travel, excursions, and museum visits. In particular, some of the art classes and food culture classes have fees. In courses such as photography, painting, drawing and sculpture, students will be required to purchase materials and supplies for the course.

Other Expenses throughout the Term

In addition to the budget worksheet supplied (which your student should complete), students will also want to have some additional money for personal items. Some examples include gifts, souvenirs and personal purchases (the amount here could vary greatly), photocopying (about €0.10 per copy), and telephone cards between €5 and €30 each.

On average, students spend between \$3,000 and \$5,000 above and beyond the program fee. However, some students spend considerably more than this depending on lifestyle. Independent travel and the purchase of expensive personal items (such as clothes) are usually the largest items.

5. Visiting Your Student in Florence

Parents, friends and relatives are always welcome at the Institute and, of course, we understand the desire for students to devote time to friends and relatives who make the long journey to visit them during the semester. However, students are also required to respect our academic policies and faithfully attend and participate in all classes, course field trips, excursions, exams, and other class activities and events. Each semester, therefore, the academic calendar provides for a week-long break, just after mid-term exams, during which time no classes are held. At this time students can travel independently or devote time to friends and relatives who visit, without missing any portion of the academic program.

We kindly ask all students, relatives and friends to visit during the fall or spring break so as not to interfere with the student’s responsibility to participate fully in Institute courses. Students will not be excused from class or class-related activities to spend time with visiting friends and/or relatives.

In order to help coordinate travel, below you’ll find the dates when classes will not be in session.

Summer 2008

During the six week summer session there is no extended break. The only regular school day

when the Institute will not be open is June 2, a national holiday.

Feel free to request a list of places to stay and eat by sending an email to info@palazzorucellai.org

6. What Parents Can Do to Assist

Palazzo Rucellai encourages parents to take an active role in supporting their son's or daughter's interest in studying abroad. The support and encouragement of a parent can make all the difference in how a student goes about the process and how well prepared a student is to undertake study abroad.

Prior to Departure

Familiarize yourself with the philosophy of the program on which they are about to embark.

Perusing our website is a good place to do this.

Talk about their goals and expectations in studying abroad.

Talk about any fears or apprehensions they may have.

Assure them that they have your support.

While offering limited assistance, encourage them to take responsibility for pre-departure logistics and paperwork.

Read the General and School-specific handbooks you will receive prior to their departure.

Help organize their finances while abroad.

Make sure that they have adequate health insurance coverage.

Confirm as soon as possible that their passport is valid and extends at least six months beyond the end of the program.

Check periodically with them to confirm that they are gathering the necessary paperwork to secure a visa, if required.

Investigate the possibility of securing a power of attorney on their behalf so that the processing of documents in their absence will be easy.

While Abroad

Do not accompany them to the host country at the start of the program.

Encourage independence and self-reliance.

Understand that all students will experience culture shock and that this may have a significant impact on what they are communicating to you about the experience.

Allow them the time and space to develop a support network abroad rather than relying totally on the one back home.

Avoid too frequent e-mail or phone communication, which can interfere with integration into the host culture.

Avoid visiting while the academic program is in session; visit during semester break.

Upon Return Home

Recognize that they have had a life-changing experience and that, while you may have remained more or less the same, they are probably not quite the same person they were before going abroad.

Let them share the experience with you as much as they want.

Understand that they may experience re-entry culture shock and that this can be even more intense than the original culture shock on arrival abroad.

7. Rules and Regulations

To attend the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai, all students will be required to sign a **Participation Agreement**, a **Student Conduct Code**, and a **Housing Agreement**. These are attached to this document for your convenience. Please note that we expect all students to fully respect our policies and procedures while abroad, and reserve the right to dismiss any student, without refund, who violates the rules and regulations. Such decisions would never be taken lightly or without due process and full consultation with the student's home college or university.

Name: _____

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai

**AGREEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN
THE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM AT THE INSTITUTE**

I, the undersigned, agree that, in keeping with the objectives of the program, I am expected to carry a full course load (minimum 12 credits) and abide by the academic standards as defined by the Institute and my home school.

I understand that my conduct during the program inside and outside the classroom reflects upon my home university and the Institute. I acknowledge that I have received, understand and shall abide by the Student Conduct Code of the Institute. I will also abide by the laws and respect the customs of the host country.

I have also read, understand and will abide by all terms and conditions of the housing agreement associated with the program, including payment of damages, check-in and check-out dates, and any other behavior expectations as outlined by the proprietor or the Institute.

I agree that, if the Director of the Institute and the Dean of Students and the Director of Study Abroad at my home institution determine, on the basis of due process as outlined in the student conduct code, that my conduct is in violation of the student code or the Institute's housing agreement, my participation in the program may be terminated.

As a result of this agreement, I authorize the Institute to contact the emergency numbers that I have given about any health or safety emergency, or any allegation of misconduct. I further expressly authorize the law enforcement officers of the city of Florence to contact the Institute in the event that I am stopped by them for a misdemeanor or any other transgression.

I understand that the Institute may share information regarding academic, emergency, medical, disciplinary, legal and health related issues with those that have a need to know including but not limited to my home campus, health care providers, and emergency contacts.

I hereby agree to comply with the above-mentioned conditions of participation. I understand that if I am asked to leave the program, I risk forfeiture of all course credit, as well as program and all other associated fees.

Signature

Date

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai

Student Conduct Code

Students who attend the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai are representatives of the Institute at all times while enrolled. Consequently, any student who engages in conduct unbecoming of an Institute student will be violating this code and will be subject to appropriate review and sanctions up to and including removal from the program. Information regarding students who violate Institute policies will be provided to the student's home school and may be provided to their parents.

The Program Director shall make the final determination on what constitutes a potential violation of the Student Conduct Code and shall establish the specific charge(s) as appropriate. The following actions/behaviors shall constitute violations of the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai Student Conduct Code. Although this list is extensive, it should not be regarded as all-inclusive and is subject to change at the discretion of the administration of the Institute.

1. Academic misconduct including, but not limited to, plagiarism and cheating.
2. Violating country or local laws while on the Institute's premises, or while in attendance at Institute sponsored or supervised events, or committing off-campus violations of country or local laws, or actions that adversely affect the Institute or the pursuit of its objectives.
3. Any form of coercive sexual activity, including but not limited to, acts of sexual assault (on a stranger, date, or acquaintance), sexual abuse, or unwanted sexual contact.
4. Harassment of an individual or group, or any conduct which subjects a person or group to unwanted physical contact or the threat of such contact, or which seriously threatens or alarms a person or group.
5. Committing acts of physical or mental abuse or engaging in actions which intimidate, harass, threaten, coerce, or otherwise endanger the health or safety of one's self or another person. This includes but is not limited to fighting.
6. Engaging in disorderly conduct. For purposes of this code, disorderly conduct is defined as, but is not limited to, acts which are not civil or respectful, or which breach the peace.
7. The abuse of alcohol (defined as excessive consumption leading to inebriation, loss of balance, loss of full awareness, or rowdiness on the part of students of the Institute) shall be considered unacceptable conduct and a violation of this code, as will any disorderly or disruptive behavior while under the influence of alcohol. Furthermore, alcohol or alcohol related material shall not be consumed or displayed in any public area or at the Institute. Objects used as drinking apparatuses that promote rapid consumption of alcohol are prohibited.

- The use of alcohol in student apartments by either students or their guests is prohibited, with the exception of moderate consumption of wine or beer exclusively to accompany meals.
8. The selling, distribution, misuse, possession, or professionally unsupervised use of all prescription drugs, hallucinogenic drugs, and controlled substances (including marijuana, etc.) by any member of the Institute community except as expressly permitted by law. This also includes the misuse of nonprescription medication or other substances. The sale, distribution, or possession of drug paraphernalia (pipes, bong, roach clips, rolling papers, etc.) is prohibited.
 9. Violating the Institute housing agreement, including, but not limited to, allowing the presence of overnight guests.
 10. Allowing recently acquainted or other unauthorized people into student apartments.
 11. Aiding, abetting, or attempting to commit any act which violates the Student Conduct Code. A student present in a room when a Student Conduct Code is violated may be held responsible even if he or she is not directly involved in the perpetration of the violation. Students who anticipate or observe a violation are expected to remove themselves from participation and are encouraged to report the violation. All students are fully responsible for their guests' behavior.
 12. Unauthorized possession, duplication, or use of keys or access cards to any Institute premise, or unauthorized entry or use of Institute premises.
 13. Unauthorized possession, use or misuse, removal, defacing, tampering, damage or destruction of Institute owned or leased property (including student apartments), equipment (including the telephone system), programs, or materials, as well as that of any member of the Institute community, guest of the Institute, vendor, contractor, or any other person.
 14. Any action which creates a fire hazard. This includes but is not limited to tampering with fire safety equipment, possessing or using any hazardous or explosive material, failing to evacuate a building area after notice has been given, or knowingly making a false report of a dangerous condition.
 15. Failure to comply with the instructions or requests of Institute staff or other officials acting in the performance of their assigned duties; failure to positively identify one's self or providing false information when appropriately requested to do so; refusal to respond to an administrative office; withholding material information from the Institute; making a false statement to any Institute official.
 16. The manufacture, sale, use, or possession of false identification or permit. Acts of dishonesty including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any Institute document;
 - b. Representing the Institute, any recognized student organization, Institute personnel, or any official Institute group without explicit prior consent.
 17. Theft or misuse of computer information systems (Internet connection, network, etc.) including, but not limited to:

- a. Unauthorized entry into a file, to use, read, or change contents;
 - b. Unauthorized transfer of files or programs;
 - c. Unauthorized use of another person's identification and password;
 - d. Use of computing or phone systems to send obscene, threatening or harassing messages;
 - e. Interfering with the normal operation of the Institute computing system, including the initiation of the spread of a computer virus.
18. Abuse of the judicial system including, but not limited to:
- a. Interference with the conduct of a judicial proceeding;
 - b. Falsification, distortion, or misrepresentation of information before a judicial body;
 - c. Attempting to discourage an individual's proper participation in, or use of, the judicial system;
 - d. Attempting to influence the impartiality of a member of a judicial body prior to, during, and/or after a judicial proceeding;
 - e. Harassment (verbal or physical) or intimidation of a member of a judicial body, witness or victim prior to, during, or after a judicial proceeding;
 - f. Failure to obey a "notice to appear" as a witness;
 - g. Influencing or attempting to influence another person to commit an abuse of the judicial system.
 - h. Failure to comply with a sanction or with the terms of an administrative agreement.
19. Violations of the Student Conduct Code that are motivated by prejudice toward a person or group because of factors such as race, religion, ethnicity, disability, national origin, age, gender or sexual orientation. Such violations may be assessed an enhanced sanction.
20. Use, possession, or storage of any weapon, whether or not a license has been issued.

Judicial Procedures

- Students charged with a violation will receive either a verbal or written explanation of the specific charge/s by the Directors* and notification will be made to the home institution.
- Whenever possible, students accused of a violation of the Student Conduct Code will meet with the Directors. At this meeting the student will be informed of possible outcomes and will be allowed to discuss and review the charges being brought against him or her.
- If a student denies responsibility for the charged violation, the Directors will consider all available reports and other relevant information, and a judgment will be rendered as to whether the student did or did not violate the student conduct code or Institute policies. A final decision will be rendered as quickly as possible. Students will be notified, typically in writing, as soon as a decision has been reached. Sanctions for violations are in effect as soon as the student has been notified.

- Appropriate members of the student's home school will be consulted for the determination of final decisions.
- When deemed appropriate, the parents of the charged student/s will be contacted and informed of the alleged violations/charges and/or final decisions.
- Home schools of the charged student/s will be informed of the charges and final decisions.

* When used herein Directors means the Program Director and/or Associate Directors.

Sanctions

Sanctions are designed to: a) promote student growth, education and safety; b) to enhance and protect the educational environment of the Institute. Sanctions may take the following forms, either singly or in combination, or other forms as determined by the Program Director or his/her designee.

- **Written Warning**
- **Notification of home school and parents of any violation**
- **Restitution/Fine:** Payment for damages, theft, or penalty
- **Community Education or Service:** Educational or service task/s as assigned for a limited period of time
- **Loss of Privileges:** Withdrawal of the use of facilities or participation in events/activities of the Institute, either permanently or for a period of time
- **Disciplinary Probation:** Notification that any further infraction within a stated period of time will result in dismissal from the program
- **Dismissal from Institute Housing:** Students may continue to attend classes and complete academic work but must find and finance their own housing.
- **Dismissal:** Permanent termination of student status from the program

Rev. 4/08

The Institute at Palazzo Rucellai
Florence, Italy

STUDENT HOUSING INFORMATION AND AGREEMENT

This document has been written with an aim to helping you to adjust to life in your housing in Florence, by addressing some possible confusions and offering some clarifications. As you know, your sojourn abroad will not be without moments of difficulty, as you attempt to bridge the many overt and covert cultural differences that you will encounter. The administration and staff of the Institute want this period to be a memorable time of discovery and personal growth for you. We do not intend the following clarifications to appear forbidding. On the contrary, we are confident that students will welcome the challenge of adapting to a cultural environment that is different from the one they are used to, and that, in the course of the session, they will develop an awareness of the privilege of being placed in housing which makes it possible for them to traverse, on a daily basis, streets, piazzas, and buildings that have been venerated by lovers of culture and art over the centuries.

Apartments

Since the Institute places students in apartments, it is natural for them to assume that they may therefore make use of them as they might any other apartment that they themselves might have rented, on their own, in the U.S. **Since this is not the case, it is important to clarify the significant differences that prevail.**

The apartments in which program participants are housed are NOT rented to the students but **to the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai**, which signs a contract, accepts specific conditions, and engages in specific agreements with the proprietors. The Institute is legally responsible for the apartments, and pays the rent directly. In return for the sum paid for housing by the students, it assigns a bed, usually in a double room, sometimes in a triple, and only very occasionally in a single. In addition, it takes care that students have access to a reasonably equipped kitchen and other basic appliances, such as an iron and a washing machine.

Not one of the apartments currently under lease to the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai would have been available to the students by a direct rental. In other words, the proprietors agreed to let these apartments for student use only and solely because the lease was signed by the Institute, because the Institute has assumed the entire responsibility for their preservation and proper use, and because the student occupancy in each individual case is temporary and with a prefixed limit. The students should see the apartments as temporary lodging for the duration of the stay in Florence.

House Visits

During the session, the Housing Coordinator will arrange two house visits for each apartment. The first will be held during orientation and the second before the end of the session. House visits are an opportunity to discuss various features of the apartment and the neighbourhood, some cultural differences between living in Italy and in the U.S. and the procedures for properly leaving the apartment before the end of the session. Your presence is required during these house visits. In addition to these scheduled visits, the Housing Coordinator will make three pre-announced visits during the session to check the general conditions of the apartment. Please note that the Housing Coordinator or staff from the Housing Agency may make unannounced visits during the session in order to be present for maintenance repairs, to check on damages in the apartment, or to make sure there are not any illegal guests. Since the Institute is legally

responsible for the apartments, we have promised the proprietors that we will make periodic visits to check on their condition.

Damages

The proprietors expect program participants to exercise extreme care and attention in preserving the apartments in the condition in which they were delivered on the first day of their arrival. The terms of the lease provide that the Institute will be held responsible in the event of any damage to the apartment, a charge that would of course be passed on to the students. Students are responsible for damages that are caused by them, either directly or indirectly, and will be billed for related costs. Direct damages are caused by a purposeful action, for example: misusing furniture, forcing or slamming a window or door. Indirect damages are caused by neglect, for example: leaving windows open, letting windows or doors slam, letting water spill out from sinks or showers, leaving coins in clothes' pockets when doing a wash. In order to better preserve the apartments, we offer some suggestions to students: when opening windows, please make sure that both the windows and doors are secured in some way i.e. with doorstops; when using the kitchens or bathrooms, mop up immediately any water that has spilled out from sinks or showers; when washing clothes, remove all metal items from pockets, and; when using the kitchens, take care not to drop dishes or to leave pots and pans on the stove with an open flame for an extended period of time.

Students may not personalize the appearance of the apartments. **No pictures, photos, posters, postcards, etc. may be tacked, taped or hung in any way on the painted walls of the apartments.** The terms of the lease provide that the Institute will be responsible for repainting the apartment in the event of any damage to the paint from tape or other substances, a charge that would of course have to be passed on to the students. However, students should realize that, here in Italy, paying for damages is not a simple way out. Even after damages are paid, landlords are increasingly reluctant to renew apartment contracts to American programs, and they frequently do not have the view that payment compensates for the mistreatment of property.

Communal Living

Since you will be sharing close living quarters, in most cases with companions previously unknown to you, special attention must be given to exercising the maximum consideration and mutual respect, which covers actions as varied as **not leaving dirty dishes in the sink, not having private guests in the bedrooms, and not making shared bedrooms inaccessible to roommates due to idiosyncratic sleeping patterns.**

Cleanliness

Domestic cleanliness and orderliness are much valued here, and students are expected to maintain a reasonable degree of both in the apartments, not least as **a gesture of consideration towards their companions.** In the event of excessive dirtiness, we will have to have the apartment cleaned at your expense.

Basic cleaning supplies (i.e. broom, dust pan and mop) will be provided in the apartments but students are responsible for purchasing cleaning products, such as detergents, from houseware stores. Students are likewise responsible for purchasing all consumable household items such as toilet paper, paper towels and light bulbs.

Special requirements for kitchen cleanliness

The kitchen must be cleaned regularly to avoid the invasion of ants and other insects and in consideration of others. A schedule of kitchen cleaning duties should be worked out and posted.

Dishtowels should be used exclusively for pots and dishes and never to clean floors, shoes or other objects.

Bathrooms

Special care must be taken not to clog drains with hair. Plumbing bills incurred because of negligence in this matter will be passed on to the apartment occupiers. **Toilets** are delicate and prone to malfunction, **especially if any object other than strictly organic matter and toilet paper is thrown in them.**

Please keep in mind that there are no garbage disposals in Florence. Food clogs sink drains. Hair clogs shower drains. Students will be charged for all plumbing repair bills.

Towels must be used exclusively for drying the body and not to clean floors, shoes, or other objects.

If towels are in poor condition at the end of the program (i.e. stained, ripped, or have never been washed) students will be charged for the damaged towels. The same goes for sheets which must be laundered regularly.

Trash

Trash must be disposed of daily in the public bins nearest the apartment, and not allowed to accumulate. Organic matter should not remain in the kitchen trash for any longer than one day. The proprietors (and good sense) insist on this. When possible, and where differentiated bins are available, sort trash and recycle. We suggest that schedules and turns be organized to distribute equitably the responsibility for taking out the daily trash and garbage.

Guests

In every case the lease specifies that the apartment will be used only by the students assigned to it. **Overnight guests cannot be accommodated, and unauthorized persons must never spend the night in the apartments. The Institute is adamant about enforcing this rule; if there is a violation, students are subject to expulsion from Institute housing, and will be fined a penalty charge.** Housing guests in the apartments, even for a few hours, is a privilege, not a right. Students must not abuse this privilege by having non-program participants excessively present in the student apartments.

Strangers of recent acquaintance should never be invited into Institute apartments.

Alcohol

It should also be noted that, **except for wine with meals, the program does not permit the presence of any alcoholic beverages in the apartments.** This means that no bottles of hard liquor may be kept in the apartments, nor, by the way, the empty bottles of wine already consumed. We take the rules about alcohol in the apartments very seriously, and immediately report infractions to the Study Abroad Office and Dean of Students at your home institution. Disregard of this rule may lead to expulsion from the apartment.

We also expect students to avoid excessive drinking in general. Students, who get drunk, in addition to being a general embarrassment in a country where drinking is much frowned upon, are also a **security risk to themselves and their companions. American students must at all times be in full control of their senses.**

Excessive drinking is an indication of immaturity and as such unsuited to study abroad.

Smoking

The apartments are smoke-free zones.

Illegal substances

Possession or use of illegal substances is cause for immediate expulsion.

Energy, I (Electricity)

Students must become cognizant of the enormous difference in the cost of energy which prevails here in Europe. Europeans waste much less in this area than Americans are accustomed to do. Temperatures, by law, should never be set above 20c (= 68F), and lights should be on only in rooms which are occupied, and then only when there is insufficient natural daylight. Students should try to develop the habit of opening the shutters in the morning to let in the natural daylight, and closing them in the evening for privacy and security. Water, a precious resource worldwide, should be used judiciously. Furthermore, **Italian apartments are supplied with only three kilowatts of power**, which is less than what you are accustomed to in the U.S. Consequently, two or more appliances which require high wattage cannot be used simultaneously (e.g., the iron, the washing machine and a hair dryer). If you attempt to draw too much electricity, there will be a short circuit and all power will shut down.

Do not use American appliances such as hairdryers, curling irons etc. The appliance will be damaged since the wattage and voltage are different in Italy.

The use of candles for any reason is not allowed, since it constitutes a fire hazard and invalidates insurance coverage. **Every student should provide himself with a small flashlight, for use in the event of a power outage, for entering double rooms late at night, and for any other eventuality.** Alarm clocks should be battery operated so as not to be affected by a temporary power outage.

The Institute has calculated the cost of normal use of utilities including electricity, water and gas. The Institute will instruct students how to regulate the use of utilities. All meters will be read upon your arrival. Total energy use will be calculated on your last day in the apartment, and excessive charges will be passed on to you.

During the first house visit, students will be given instructions in case a power outage or water leak occurs.

The Washing Machine

The washing machine functions according to a different guiding mind than those in the U.S, and takes some getting used to. During the first house visit, students will be given instructions for the washing machines.

Students should realize that if their apartment-mates are setting the washing machine at extremely high temperatures or doing an excessive number of loads of laundry, they will all be sharing in the excessive energy costs which will be passed on at the end of the session. As a matter of consideration for others, therefore, be attentive to these guidelines. Students should always do a full load of laundry and no more than one load a week per person. Large items, such as sheets and towels, should be taken to a laundromat where you will have access to dryers.

Maintenance

Students should report any maintenance problems to the Housing Coordinator as soon as they occur, and fill out and sign a *housing maintenance request form* available at the Institute. Please note that repairs for appliances such as hot water heaters and washers may take a considerable time.

Noise

Students must be respectful of the condominium, which they share with families with conservative habits and work routines. This means that noise which might reach their ears after 11 P.M. is not allowed (by condominium and city regulations). Slippers should be worn in order to avoid disturbing the people who live in the apartment below. In more than one case, our contracts are only for the duration of the session, and renewal depends on YOU. Whether or not the next group will be able to enjoy these prime locations depends on the way you comport yourselves now.

Decorum

“Decorum” may sound like an old-fashioned word, but it comes to our aid in these circumstances. Your personal reputation, that of the U.S., and that of the Institute will depend on your observation of its spoken and unspoken codes. Some examples: behavior, dress, and voice volume all need to be carefully moderated when using the balconies. Some general rules: don’t appear on balconies or patios in pyjamas, bathing suits, or excessively skimpy clothing; men: no nude torsos; shutters should be closed in the evening when lights are turned on inside; do not rest feet on the walls (indoors or out!). And anything else you can think of on your own!

Security

Finally, we must mention the important matter of security. American students naturally attract attention, and can easily become the object of theft or other dubious intentions. Several years ago, due to imprudent habits (leaving not only the windows but also the shutters open through the night) we had an unfortunate break-in and serious losses.

The Institute reminds students to take every care in locking up: doors must be double locked using the keys; windows and, especially, **shutters** closed and locked at night and when leaving the apartment. **It is the student’s responsibility to take all proper security measures. The Institute will not be responsible for loss of property or personal effects in the event that a theft takes place.**

As an additional precaution, we advise making a little packet of photocopies of all important documents - credit cards, airline tickets, passports, student card, etc. - and leaving it with the Student Services Office.

Keys

For security reasons, the Institute and apartment address must never be attached to the apartment and building keys or kept with them in a wallet or purse. Students must report lost or stolen keys to the Institute, and are responsible for paying for replacement keys. The Institute will decide on a case-by-case basis if the apartment and building locks must be changed, a cost that will be billed to the students.

Bills & Deposits

During Orientation, students are required to complete a credit card authorization form for an amount up to \$200 which will serve in lieu of a **housing damages deposit**. This authorization will be kept on file. Bills up to €50 should be paid directly in cash to the Institute. For bills over €50, the student may choose to have the amount charged through the credit card authorization or to pay the amount in cash. Personal checks cannot be accepted. No charges will be made to a credit card without prior notice given to the student.

If there are damages in an apartment, and no one student claims responsibility for the cost (repairs, excessive utility use, change of lock, etc), all students in the apartment will be billed.

During the Orientation period, students should report any problems that they have concerning the apartments, especially broken, damaged, or missing items.

Telephone numbers

The Institute phone number (055.264.5910) and 24-hour emergency cell phone number (348.897.2155) should be kept with you at all times.

Emergency numbers are as follows: 112 or 113 for the police; 118 for medical emergencies. These calls are free, even from cell phones. If you should need to resort to these numbers, you will have to speak some Italian. Practice in advance of need.

Vacating the Apartments

The date for vacating the apartments for the Summer 2008 session is Sunday, June 29th, 2008 at 12:00 noon.

No exceptions can be allowed.

Further information regarding Institute housing can be found in the Student Handbook. Please keep both this document and the handbook for future reference.

I have read the document entitled *Student Housing Information and Agreement* and accept the conditions, rules, and responsibilities assigned to me as a recipient of Institute housing.

Print Name: _____

Sign Name: _____

Date: _____