



**The Ontario/Maharashtra-Goa  
Student Exchange Program**

**2010-2011  
Notes for Students going to Maharashtra and Goa**

Prepared by the OMG Ontario Program Office

Version June 1, 2010

### Disclaimer

These notes are provided for your information and convenience only. We make no claim, expressed or implied, that the information contained in these notes are free of error, or that they will meet your requirements during your participation in the OMG Program. You are responsible for **all aspects** of your participation in the Program, including, but not limited to, your health, safety, lodging, course selection, study program, travel plans, legal status, insurance, and financial obligations. The OMG Program Offices in Canada and India; your home and host universities; and their representatives and agents assume no financial or other liability arising from or related to your participation in the Program.

The International Studies Office of your Home University provides information and guidance on all aspects of study abroad as an exchange student. Many Ontario universities maintain a 24/7 hotline for exchange students. You should note down and carry the phone number with you.

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How did we do? Did these Notes prove useful? Please send your comments to:  
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### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. What language(s) do I need to know?**

Most people in the cities have some knowledge of English, and roughly 50% can speak English passably. However your accent and theirs may cause comprehension problems. You can get by with English in most parts of India.

**2. Will I have problems with spicy food?**

Although Indian "curry" has the perception of being hot and spicy, not all food in India are. There is an incredible range of tastes and flavours, from delicate rose flavour to pungent hottest curries. Most outsiders soon find their niche taste range and fall in love with the food.

**3. Can I use dollars in India?**

In general, no. Dollars can be readily exchanged at banks. The Indian currency is the Rupee, with Cd\$1=Rs40 to 45.

**4. What does it cost to live as a student?**

Rental cost for a shared apartment in Pune is about \$125. Another \$125 covers food and miscellaneous expenses. You are looking at \$250/month in Pune. Mumbai is more expensive, about \$500/month.

**5. Will there be someone to help me after I arrive?**

Please let Ms. Vaishali Potnis, OMG India Office, [vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com](mailto:vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com), know of your travel plans well ahead of time. You will be met at the airport on arrival, and Vaishali will provide help in finding temporary and permanent lodgings, and basic orientation, as resources permit.

**6. How do I find a place to stay?**

While the Program Office is not responsible for your living arrangements, you will be provided with help and advice as resources permit. In Pune accommodation is generally available. In core areas of Mumbai rental spaces are very scarce. You are strongly urged to contact your Host institution well ahead for advice and help in finding satisfactory lodgings.

**7. What if I decide to leave halfway?**

If there are compelling reasons for you to leave in the middle of a semester, please inform the OMG India Coordinator Ms. Vaishali Potnis

[vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com](mailto:vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com) and Dagmar Todd in the OMG Ontario Office [dtodd@yorku.ca](mailto:dtodd@yorku.ca), as well as the International Office of your home and host university and seek approval to leave. If you do not obtain the approval, you will be required to pay back any stipend paid to you. On top of that your Home University may also have other academic or financial penalties associated with leaving an exchange program without approval.

**8. What about working in India?** In general students in India do not work during term time. To derive the maximum benefits from the OMG Exchange Program, you are expected to carry a full course load.

**9. What about changing universities?** In general we do not encourage changing of institutions without a substantive reason. Under special circumstances we will try to assist you as much as possible. Please contact the Program Office before attempting to change your host university.

**10. What about financial assistance?** The Province of Ontario offers competitive international opportunity scholarships (OIEOS), for which you may be eligible to apply through your home university in Ontario. Students who do not win such an award will receive a stipend from the OMG Program. There are 25 stipends to be awarded.

**11. What do I have to pay?** As a OMG exchange student you do not have to pay tuition fees at the Host university, but you do have to pay tuition fees at your Home university for the term(s) that you are on the exchange. You are responsible for all other costs involved in participating in this academic exchange, including, but not limited to, transportation, food, lodging, and incidental costs.

**12. Where can I find information about the host university and host country?** Search on the web is the first step of course. Many Ontario universities provide Orientation Programs for outgoing exchange students, as does OMG. It is recommended that you attend both your Home University and the OMG Orientation.

## Introduction

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in the Ontario Maharashtra Goa Student Exchange Program (OMG). The exchange is a personal opportunity for you to pursue your studies at one of the colleges and universities of Maharashtra and Goa, while remaining a degree candidate at your home university in Ontario and to grow from the experience of living in a foreign culture. It is also an opportunity to enrich the knowledge base and culture of your home and host universities and the people and societies of Ontario and India.

This handbook exists in both print and electronic versions (<http://www.omgprogram.org/>). You will

receive a printed copy at the Outgoing Orientation in May; please take it with you to India.

A major component of participating in an international exchange program is learning how to live with uncertainty. It is natural for you to want detailed information on all aspects of study in Maharashtra and Goa, including specifics about your host university. Please understand that it is impossible for any one document to provide that kind of information. This handbook is meant to provide you with information which will help you make the most of your stay in Maharashtra and Goa.

## Expectations and Responsibilities

Our primary expectation is that you will have an academically and personally rewarding and enjoyable year abroad. Please be aware of, and hold to, the following list of expectations and responsibilities:

1. You are expected to engage in **fulltime** study at your host university. The definition of "fulltime study" may vary by discipline and level. For undergraduates and graduate students engaging solely in course work, 'fulltime' usually means regularly attending, and remaining current in, in at least five courses per semester. Graduate students engaged in research are responsible for obtaining the approval of their home program for the type and amount of work to be done.
2. You will be seen as a representative of your home university, the OMG Program as a whole, and Canada. You are expected to conduct yourself so as to reflect well upon these larger entities. Activities that are inconsistent with the purpose of the exchange may result your being withdrawn from the Program.
3. You are responsible for keeping the Program Office informed of your current address and telephone number; and for consulting the Office in advance if you are contemplating major changes in your study plan or your place of study. Please do not attempt to change your host university before obtaining the permission of the Program Office.
4. You are responsible for **all aspects** of your participation in the Program, including, but not limited to, your health, safety, lodging, course selection, study program, travel plans, legal status, insurance, and financial obligations. The OMG Program Offices in Canada and India; your home and host universities; and their representatives and agents assume no financial or other liability arising from or related to your participation in the Program.
5. You are responsible for completing a report on your experience in the Program to the Program Office one month after the end of your exchange period. Also, you are expected to respond promptly to requests for information from the Program Office during the exchange period.
6. As a student officially enrolled at both your host university and your home university, you are expected to be aware of, and observe, the regulations and codes of conduct of each institution.
7. Credit for work done abroad is granted at the discretion of your home university. You are responsible for documenting work done abroad and for applying to your home university for credit you wish to receive.
8. After you return home, we hope that you will stay in contact with the Program and that you will want to act as a mentor for Maharashtra-Goa students coming to your home university.

## Orientation Workshop in Ontario

Every spring the Program organizes an Orientation Workshop. All new Ontario participants and the OMG students from Maharashtra and Goa currently studying in Ontario are invited. The Workshop is an important opportunity to meet the other Ontario Program members as well as the Maharashtra and Goa students who are finishing their year in Ontario. We will also invite some former Ontario

participants. Ontario students who will be going to France under the Ontario/Rhône-Alpes (ORA), to Germany under the Ontario/Baden-Württemberg (OBW), to China under the Ontario-Jiangsu (OJS) Programs will also be participating.

Updated information is available on the OMG website.

### Visit the Travel Clinic

It is important to remember that India is still a third world country and health care facilities are limited. You as a traveller will not have immunity to many ailments in India. You should visit your local travel clinic in Canada several months before

departure to get all the recommended immunisations. You should also gather information on routine health safety precautions, such as drinking only bottled or boiled water, avoiding uncooked fruits and vegetables.

### Travel

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) maintains a Travel Reports and Warnings webpage

[http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/menu-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp)

The India page is at:

[http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/report\\_rapport-eng.asp?id=128000](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/report_rapport-eng.asp?id=128000)

You are urged to consult this page before departure, and also during your stay abroad.

#### *Registration of Canadians Abroad*

DFAIT offers a registration service for all Canadians travelling or living abroad. This service is provided so that we can contact and assist you in an emergency in a foreign country, such as a natural

disaster or civil unrest, or inform you of a family emergency at home. See

[https://www.voyage2.gc.ca/Registration\\_inscription/Register\\_Inscrire/Login\\_ouvrir-une-session-eng.aspx?fwd=true&hash=p0V4sJhYtXNnDsAOImpW8w6161](https://www.voyage2.gc.ca/Registration_inscription/Register_Inscrire/Login_ouvrir-une-session-eng.aspx?fwd=true&hash=p0V4sJhYtXNnDsAOImpW8w6161)

For more information, visit the FAQ on [Registration of Canadians Abroad](#):

<http://www.voyage.gc.ca/faq/roca-eng.asp>

You are responsible for ensuring that you have a passport whose validity extends beyond the entire time of your stay in India. You are also responsible for making your own travel arrangements to the Host University.

### Flight Path

Many airlines connect Toronto and Mumbai, with stops at major European airports. One can take a plane, train, bus or taxi to go to Pune from Mumbai airport. Another route is Toronto to Dubai or Abu

Dhabi, and then take a flight directly to Pune. If you are adventurous, you can fly to Delhi and take a train to Pune.

### What To Take Along

Make a checklist of what to take along. Be sure to include:

- ✓ your passport(s), with all required documents;
- ✓ the letter of admission from your host university;
- ✓ certified copies of all your degrees and transcripts, and a transcript of all university courses;
- ✓ certified copies of all other documents needed for your student visa/ residence permit;
- ✓ any prescription medicines you will need;
- ✓ your eyeglasses prescription (if you wear glasses);
- ✓ copies of passport, visa, drivers licence, Home University student card, carried separately (in case the originals are lost or stolen);

- ✓ any spare recent passport photos (in case required for some form);
- ✓ a list of relevant email addresses so you can correspond with your home department, academic counsellor, International Office, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid office, etc. (of course, you can always get them from the web if you need to);
- ✓ if a Hotline Phone number for exchange students abroad is provided by your Home University, don't forget to note it down;
- ✓ don't forget to take along patience and a sense of humour!

### Insurance

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care strongly recommends that you get additional insurance coverage, whether you are absent from Canada for a few minutes or for an extended time. Please see:

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry\\_services.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry_services.html) and

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publication/s/ohip/travel.aspx>  
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ohip/longer.html>

The above information applies to students under OHIP. If you have insurance under other plans such as UHIP (University Health Insurance Plan),

you are urged to consult the relevant information sources.

Having adequate medical insurance and other forms of insurance is essential. The problem with insurance is that we always assume we won't need it; that makes it easy to assume it is an unnecessary expense. Sad experience brings an important lesson home: the right way to calculate the cost of insurance is to think about where the

money would come from if certain eventualities (like illness or even death) occurred. The problem here is that we don't like to think about these things. Insurance companies do not issue policies retroactively.

Sadly, we are not just speaking hypothetically here. The moral: It is far better to have too much insurance than too little.

### Courses

#### *Pune University Main Campus*

Since Pune University does not offer any undergraduate courses on the main campus, special permission has been granted to OMG undergraduate exchange students to take Masters level courses available in the main campus. This is similar to the practice at many Ontario universities which allow senior undergraduate students to enrol in (post)graduate courses, with special permission. With proper selection of courses, and the help provided by Pune University faculty, we have not had any complaint about the courses being difficult for OMG students. If you find a (post)graduate course too difficult to handle, do get in touch with Ms. Vaishali Potnis early on, to find alternate courses.

#### *Pune University Affiliated Colleges (Sciences and Technology)*

Ontario undergrad students in sciences or technology should enrol in undergraduate courses in the affiliated colleges of Pune University. In exceptional cases special permission may be sought for specific (post)graduate courses.

#### *All other colleges and universities in Mumbai, Pune and Goa*

Ontario undergraduate students should select only undergraduate courses unless special permission to take (post)graduate courses has been sought.

### Semester Start Dates

It is a good idea to find out when the classes start, and plan to arrive at least one week before classes.

If there is a problem in your arriving by the first day of classes, we may be able to discuss with your Host Department, College or University, regarding permission for you to join later. However, you will be responsible to make up for the missed lectures or labs.

#### *Pune University Main Campus*

The Semester I start date is around mid-July. But classes actually start around first week of August. The Semester II start date is around the first week

of December. The start dates for classes vary from Department to Department. It is a good idea to find out about the lecture start dates from Ms. Vaishali Potnis.

#### *All other colleges and universities in Pune, Mumbai and Goa*

In general Semester I starts around beginning of July, and Semester II starts around beginning of December. The actual dates vary year to year, and classes may not start right away.

### Student Visa

Every foreign national needs a visa to enter India. Applications are received and visas are issued by VFS Global (<http://in.vfsglobal.ca/index.aspx>). If you are in Toronto or Brampton, you may submit the visa application in person at their offices.

The Admission Letter from the Host institution in India is necessary to apply for the student visa. Do consult the above site for regulations, application forms and changes to regulations.

### Arrival and Accommodation

#### *Arrival*

Most flights from Europe to India arrive around midnight. Please notify Ms. Vaishali Potnis [vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com](mailto:vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com) of the OMG Pune office well ahead of the time of your arrival. You will be met at the airport and taken to a temporary accommodation.

Do not venture out of the airport at night on your own. It is not a safe practice. Newly arrived travellers have been and can be crime targets.

#### *Accommodation*

The housing situation varies by location.

#### *Mumbai*

Mumbai is an overcrowded city, and good lodgings are hard to get. *Please seek the help of the Host institution very early on for help in finding accommodation in Mumbai.*

IIT-Bombay (in Mumbai): On campus residence rooms are usually provided

#### *Pune*

The OMG Pune office will help find lodgings. [vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com](mailto:vaishalipotnis@hotmail.com). College of Engineering and VIT, both in Pune, offer residence accommodation.

There is an International Hostel on Pune Univ. campus, but rooms are in great demand. Symbiosis Univ. (in Pune) has some residence accommodation.

*Goa*

BITS: On campus residence rooms are usually provided.

### Local Orientation

In Pune help and locally useful information is provided by the OMG India Office. In Mumbai and

Goa help and information are provided by faculty in charge of international studies.

### Registration of Foreigners

Foreign nationals on Student Visa(S) are required to register with the local Foreigners Registration Office (FRO), with the local police. For the latest info please see

[http://india.gov.in/overseas/passport/foreigners\\_registration.php](http://india.gov.in/overseas/passport/foreigners_registration.php)

Upon completion of the two steps (see below) of the registration, you will be issued a 'residential permit'. It is very important to obtain this permit. If you do not have it you will not be allowed to leave India, and you may be subjected to other penalties.

You should enquire about the local registration office from your Host institution on arrival.

There are two steps:

**Step 1:** The landlord of the place where you will be living (be it a hotel or a guest house or apartment or anything else) needs to register you as a foreigner who is living on his/her premises. The landlord needs to fill out a 'C' form. You will be requested for copies of your passport and student visa. The 'C' form needs to be submitted by your landlord to the local police station within 24 hours of your arrival. You should check with the landlord that they have filled out and submitted Form 'C' to the police station.

**Step 2:** After the landlord registers you with the 'C' form, you have to go to the Foreigner's Registration Office (FRO) and fill out another form called the 'A' form. This form asks for your personal details - passport number, visa number, purpose of your visit. Again you will need to submit copies of your passport, visa, provisional letter of admission. The FRO office will issue a residential permit upon submission of the 'A' form. This procedure takes a day. Using the residential permit, you can buy a cell phone (you need to submit proof of residence to buy a local cell phone).

More information about Foreigner's Registration can be found at:

<http://www.punepolice.com/passport.htm#regi>

The address of the FRO office in Pune is:

Foreigner's Registration Office  
2, Sadhu Vaswani Road,  
Camp, Pune 411001

For Mumbai and Goa, please consult with your Host university and your landlord as to the location of the FRO.

### Local Communication

Cell phones in India are cheap, and the service charges are lower than in Canada. It is recommended that you get a local cell phone shortly after arrival. This can help in getting local lodgings, as well as communicating with friends and relatives.

You will need a residential permit issued by the Foreigners Registration Office in order to purchase a cell phone. There are many competing cell phone services. Several companies offer wireless internet service as well.

### Local Emergency

There is no 911 service in India. Find out and note local phone numbers for police and ambulance. Hospital qualities vary. Ask around for good

hospitals with emergency service in your area. In Pune, Goa and Mumbai consult the local web pages for useful emergency numbers.

### What to Wear

You will be in the tropics, so warm and humid conditions are normal. Loose cotton clothes are cooler. The local dress norm is that of modesty. One should not wear too brief or revealing outfits.

This will invite stares and unwelcome attention. Western clothes, such as blue jeans are common among the youth.

### Food

In the beginning, practice caution. Be wary of water and food borne infections. Do avoid food that is displayed uncovered or open to dust and

flies. Avoid uncooked foods such salads, and eat only fruits with a peel. Drink only bottled water, bought from a reliable store.

Although Indian "curry" has the perception of being hot and spicy, not all food in India is. There is an incredible range of tastes and flavours, from delicate rose flavour to pungent hottest curries. Most outsiders soon find their niche taste range and fall in love, with the food.

In any case, there are choices. Goat or lamb meats are common, as is a wide variety of fish and

seafood. Large sections of the population are vegetarians. Many Canadian/US fast food chains can be found in large cities. Small food marts sell packaged and frozen foods. Many students soon become fond of the menu items of the campus snack huts, where you can eat for a quarter or less.

### Health

It is important to remember that India is still a third world country, with health and police services that are not as well organised as in Canada. There is no 911 service, and response times of police and ambulance can be very long. On arrival do ask

around for a good local medical clinic, for minor ailments, and the local good hospitals with emergency and ambulance service. The cost of medicine in India is quite low, compared with Canada.

### Culture

The cities of Mumbai, Pune and Goa have individual and distinct personalities. Pune is a center of Marathi culture, with unbelievable offerings of classical dance and music. Mumbai is India's Hollywood, now known the world over as

Bollywood. Goa was the capital of the Portuguese presence in Asia for some 400 years. The Goanese cuisine is distinct, as is Goanese music and dance. It would be a good idea to sample and savour some of these cultures while you are there.

### Manners and Customs

India is a mix of old and new customs, many of which are subtly and not-so-subtly different from the customs and body language in Canada. It is important that you be aware of the mores of behaviour. As a newly arrived outsider, you are not expected to know or follow all the rules. But if you do follow Indian customs, your task will become easier.

#### *Greetings*

The Indian way of greeting and goodbye is to say 'Namaste', with a half bow and folded hands. It means 'I bow to the God within you'.

The rule is simple. Persons of same age or younger may be called by first name or nickname. Persons moderately older are typically addressed with name+respect suffix. The respect suffix is 'bhai' (brother) or 'didi' (older sister). A fellow student who is ahead in school by one year or more is generally not addressed by name, but by name+respect suffix.

#### *Marathi and Hindi*

The language spoken in Maharashtra is Marathi and the national language of India is Hindi. Both Marathi and Hindi use the same script. In the urban areas at least 50% of people either speak English or understand. So you can get by with English.

#### *Indian English*

In usage English is now considered to be a major language of discourse in India, with flourishing English language newspapers and magazines and

#### *Respect for Elders*

In India there is a respect for elders. Family elders, really old persons, great teachers or professors, gurus, are accorded an extra measure of affection by bowing down and touching his/ her feet. It is also a request for his/her blessing.

Significantly older persons are never addressed by name, but with just the respect suffix, as 'bhai' or 'bhैया', 'didi', 'uncle' or 'aunty'.

#### *Sir or Maam*

Professors and high officials are addressed as 'Sir' or 'Maam'. It is not uncommon to hear 'Sir told me', or 'As I was telling maam'.

#### *Professors*

Generally there is always a maintained distance between a professor and student. No level of familiarity is expected or attempted. Professors and students never sit down and have a laugh together. Do observe how other students approach the professor with questions, discussions etc. and follow their lead.

### Languages

book trade. With some 500 million people using English, an Indian English dialect is evolving, with words and grammar that can be different and opposite to the language that you are used to.

For example, it is common in India to praise a girl as 'homely', meaning that she would be a good homemaker.

As you spend your exchange semester in India, be aware that the same words and phrases may have different nuances, meaning and weight than what you are used to.

### Courses, Lectures

In general in India the level of interaction between professors and students is much less than in Canada. Professors generally do not encourage discourse in or out of the class.

The concept of a student exchange program, such as the OMG, and the idea of transferring credit for courses taken elsewhere is relatively new. There is a good possibility that the professor teaching your

course is unaware of the OMG Program. It is a good idea to introduce yourself and tell him/her about the program. You should also inform the professor of the evaluation method and grade reporting format for OMG students. The OMG India Office will provide an info sheet on evaluation and transcript format, on request.

### Transcripts

The assessment system generally tests memory, rather than original thinking. Open book exams, take home assignments etc. are practices that are rare in India.

Some local terms: *Internal Assessment* means tests conducted by the professor who teaches the course. In Canada this would be called a mid-term or a class test. *External Assessment* means an exam in which questions are set by someone from outside the course, and the answers are marked by another person outside the department. For local students the final grade is based on a mix of Internal and External Assessment.

#### *Evaluation of OMG Students*

For OMG exchange students we have requested the Host institution to follow only Internal Assessment, much like the system in Ontario universities. However, the word may not have reached the faculty member who is teaching your course. Do meet him/her, introduce yourself and inform him/her about the OMG program and the method of assessment. If needed, please arrange for a meeting with Ms. Vaishali Potnis.

#### *Transcripts*

The actual format of the reporting of your course credits and grades is under discussion. At the end of your OMG term, you will have in hand a transcript that will be acceptable to your Home University.

### Problems and Issues

The purpose of the OMG exchange program is for you to have a quality education at the same time as you learn about a different culture. You are expected to be flexible in your outlook. But what if things are not working out as you expected? It is a good idea to talk things over with the OMG Coordinator in Pune, Ms. Vaishali Potnis. If it is possible to resolve the problems, she will try. You should also inform your Home University

International Office. Again, they deal with hundreds of exchange students all over the world. There is a good chance that they have seen similar problems previously, and know of a solution. So rather than suffering for a whole semester, it is better, that you let the OMG Program and your Home University International Office know of your worries and concerns early on.

### Re-Entering Canada

The value of goods you are allowed to bring in duty-free after spending a week out of the country is currently \$750. Before you ship or bring home lots of stuff be conscious of the duty payable. By the way, books are not subject to duty, but you do have to pay GST on them. It's a good idea, if you are shipping things home, to keep an itemized list

of contents, and especially of the cost of items you acquired abroad.

For updated information, check the Canada Border Services website:

<http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/general/times/menu-e.html>.

*On behalf of OMG we wish you a Bon Voyage and an enjoyable term(s) as an OMG exchange student in Pune, Mumbai or Goa.*



The Ontario/Maharashtra-Goa (OMG)  
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How did we do? Did these Notes prove useful? Please send your comments to:  
[ontmg@yorku.ca](mailto:ontmg@yorku.ca)