## Preparatory Guide for Students Undertaking Residence Abroad at Alexandria Centre for Languages in 2016/2017

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The following information is provided by the ACL (Alexandria Centre for Languages) for the academic year 2016/2017.

**1) Purpose/aims of the year abroad**

The aims of the Year Abroad are twofold: to develop your spoken/written skills to a near native level of proficiency and acquire an in-depth knowledge of the cultures and societies relevant to the discipline of the programme for which you are registered.

The year abroad is a golden opportunity to broaden your perspectives. It will enable you to develop a greater circle of friends and acquaintances. Also, being in Egypt presents great opportunities to travel to other Middle Eastern countries cheaply and conveniently.

**2) Student responsibilities**

You are asked to familiarise yourself with the Student Responsibilities as set out in both the Study and Work Abroad Handbook and the School Residence Abroad Handbook.

Before you depart you are urged to learn as much useable Arabic as possible. In particular, you should buy a book on colloquial Egyptian Arabic such as *Kullu Tamam!: An Introduction to Egyptian Colloquial Arabic* by Manfred Woidich and learn as much as you can from it before you arrive in Egypt. The better your Arabic the easier it will be to make Egyptian friends and the more you will benefit from your time in the country. It would also be helpful if you could also take with you an Arabic grammar book. *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* by Martin Hinds and El-Said Badawi provides an excellent reference for Egyptian colloquial. Hardback versions of Hans Wehr and *al-Mawrid* (an Arabic-English dictionary) are also available locally at reasonable prices.

Arabic grammatical terminology: some of you may already be familiar with the Arabic grammatical terms. It is highly recommended that you familiarize yourself with or learn as much as you can of the terminology before arrival in Alexandria. The ACL Centre will, however, provide you with an Arabic grammatical terminology booklet with the rest of the teaching material.

**3) The Year Abroad programme in Alexandria**

The course in Alexandria is given at the Alexandria Centre for Languages, which is located in a unique area of the city. Just a 10 minute walk to "The Bibliotheca Alexandrina" and to the heart of the city where most of the cinemas, theatres and entertainment places are located. Many of the Universities and a number of international banks are also located in the same area. All classrooms are comfortably equipped with video and audio players in addition to a satellite TV, and radio channels which are a great asset in the learning of any foreign language. An internet service is also included. Participants have the privilege of joining sports and social clubs for a reduced membership fee. They will have opportunity to meet Egyptians and other members who enjoy sporting and leisure activity.

The Alexandria Centre is firmly committed to maintaining the highest standard of teaching in the field of Arabic language and culture to Arabic learners whether private individuals, university students, government officials, or researchers.

During the first week students will take a placement test. Throughout the year students have four assessments and students are required to obtain a satisfactory pass in the final course examination before being permitted to continue their studies at their home university. Please note that the mark obtained in the mid-year examination (January), and marks obtained in assessment tests and homework assignments, also count towards the end-of-year mark. Students will only be allowed to sit any of these exams or tests if their attendance during the period prior to the test is not less than 80%.

 The syllabus covers 18 hours per week: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA),

English/Arabic/English Translation , Media classes and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) in addition to literature classes (both classical and modern) The teaching methodology in ACL is different from that in the UK in that students are taught using Arabic language and minimal use of English, only, when needed.

Moreover the ACL will provide advice to students concerning their choice of topic and the type of sources they can consult and will appoint supervisors to guide students in their research for the Independent Study Project (ISP).

The length of the course is 31 working weeks divided between two semesters and four terms. The final grade for the Arabic Language courses will be calculated as follows:

**Modern Standard Arabic**

1st Mid Semester test (in November) 5 %

Mid-Year Exams (in January) 15 %

2nd Mid Semester test (in March) 5 %

End of year Exams (in May) 55 %

Attendance 10 %

Assignments 5 %

Class Participation 5 %

Total 100 % 80% of total mark

Egyptian Colloquial 100 % 10% of total mark

Literature 100 % 10% of total mark

**Total Mark 100%**

**The course dates read as follows:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 15th September 2016  17th September 2016 | Center open for enquiries |
| 18th September 2016 – 22 September 2016 | Registration, orientation and settling in |
| 18th September 2016 – 22th September 2016 (1 week) | 1st semester |
| 26th September 2016 – 10th November 2016 (7 weeks) |
| 21st November 2016 – 15th December 2016 (4 weeks) |
| 9th January 2017 – 26th January 2017 (3 weeks) |
| 30th January 2017 – 23rd March 2017 (8 weeks) | 2nd semester |
| 1st April 2017 – 25th May 2017 (8 weeks) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Holidays:** |  |
| 11st November 2016 – 20th November 2016 | 1st Mid Semester Break |
| 16th December 2016 – 8th January 2017 | Christmas Break and Mid-Year Holidays |
| 24th March 2017 – 31st March 2017 | 2nd Mid Semester Break |
| 25th May 2017 | End of year |

However students are required to be in Alexandria by the 12th September at the most so as to sort out settling in and seeing to other accommodation issues.

\* Detailed Course Dates is attached.

**4) Paperwork, forms and deadlines**

As for applying at the ACL Centre in Alexandria, there are no forms to fill. The Residence Abroad Officer at home Universities will inform the Program Director,Magda Abou-Youssef, with the names of the students who will attend the year abroad. However you will complete forms and applications of host institute on the day of registration (dates for Course Details will follow)

**PLEASE NOTE** that ACL Centre regulations require notification of students attending courses in Alexandria who have health problems. It is a must that ACL should be notified of any such cases and students are requested to bring along all required medications and specific dietary nutrition

**5) Visa application**

You are responsible for getting your own visa from the Egyptian Consulate-General in London (if ordered by post allow at least 15 working days; otherwise you must leave your passport at the Visa Section for 24 hours). Your visa will normally be a tourist visa which will ensure your entry into Egypt and the first month’s stay. British passport holders as well as Europeans can obtain a tourist visa on entering Egypt from any airport. Entry visa cost 25$. Try to get a six months tourist visa on the grounds that you will be studying Arabic and need this length of extension. Nevertheless the ACL will assist in extending students' visas. Visa rate changes every year. It is, however, essential that you bring six passport photographs with you to Alexandria for use on official documents.

**6) Passport**

At the earliest opportunity make sure you have a passport that is valid during the period of your stay. Valid for 2 years at the least from the day of your arrival.

**7) Travel arrangements to Egypt (Alexandria or Cairo)**

Students are responsible for their own travel arrangements and for ensuring that they reach Alexandria on time for the commencement of the course.

You can fly by a number of airlines that will land in Borg El Arab airport which lies about 50 km from Alexandria.

Alternatively, you could fly to Cairo and travel from there to Alexandria.. Connecting flights (on Egypt Air) are available normally by midnight of the same day or leave early the following morning. You can also get a taxi from the airport to the centre of Cairo (it is better to get a “limousine” because the rates are fixed). You can also get the Superjet coach from Cairo airport direct to Alexandria. Fare is 50 L.E. and there is a bus every hour. Also the West Delta buses, take the same route from Cairo airport to Alexandria but at cheaper rates 35 L.E. This takes about four hours and terminates in an area 15 minutes from the centre of Alexandria. Also, trains from Cairo to Alexandria run on the hour. At present it costs 35LE (Egyptian pounds) (about £3) for a one-way second class ticket and 55 LE (about £4) for first class.

If you arrive in groups of 5 or more, the ACL can arrange for a pick up service from Cairo airport or Borg El Arab airport in Alexandria to the required destination. Charges are calculated according to numbers. Also individual pick up can be arranged though more expensive but makes life easier on first arriving. Students will be given receipts for such trips, if required.

**8) Health**

Although Alexandria is a reasonably healthy place to live in, it is sensible to take certain precautions before leaving the UK especially if you plan to travel further afield during your stay. The following vaccinations/injections are strongly recommended: TAB, polio, tetanus, havrix or Immuno-globulin (the latter a couple of days before departure). Those contemplating travel off the beaten track should consider immunization against rabies.

There are good doctors, dentists and opticians in Alexandria and most medicines and drugs are readily available in pharmacies. You will be given a list of a selection of doctors and dentists upon your arrival to the ACL. A number of general hospitals have been opened all over the city. These are fairly clean, with good doctors, and prices are much lower than private clinics. Although the Centre will give what help it can, it cannot accept any responsibility for covering students medical expenses. You must therefore take out a travel insurance policy valid for the duration of your stay in Egypt, which includes full medical cover with a twenty-four emergency service in case of hospitalization and evacuation to the UK if necessary. Most LEAs will consider a claim for essential cover provided a standard student policy (or a photocopy) can be produced in evidence.

**9) Personal financial arrangements**

Although Egypt is no longer the cheap country to live in as it once used to be, this is offset by the current high exchange rate which at present (May 2016) is 1 pound sterling for around **12.50 Egyptian pounds (LE)**.

If one avoids five-star hotels while travelling, expensive restaurants and imported goods including wines and spirits, then the cost of living will be fairly moderate. As a broad generalization, anything imported is usually twice its normal UK price (alcoholic drinks much more) while anything locally produced is about the same as the UK price, apart from fruit and vegetables and some subsidized staple foods which are on the cheap end. Local travel is cheap as well.

Before you leave the UK give careful thought to the best way to access your personal finances. Apart from an amount of cash you will need to start off with. Think about how you may need to access cash on a regular basis and the form in which this cash should be drawn.

You may wish to consider the following:

* consulting your UK (student account) bank for advice well before you leave and keeping money in this account
* if contemplating using, say, a named credit card only (as opposed to opening a bank account) take the precaution of arranging direct debits with your bank to cover use of your card

**10) Cash can be obtained as follows:**

1. Cash point withdrawals using a credit card with the VISA symbol, MasterCard or Cirus has proved to be the easiest, safest and quickest way of withdrawing money. The amount you can withdraw daily depends on the agreement you have with your bank. A number of these cash points are located next to big banks in many areas of Alexandria.

2. Cheque encashment facility made by your UK branch with a bank in Alexandria. This is known as a Foreign Open Credit and enables you to withdraw cash up to an agreed monthly limit. You need to have your UK cheque book with you and a cheque guarantee card. Please note that those who already have an account with Barclays may not need to open this type of facility if they have a Barclays card, although the amount they may withdraw at any time is restricted. There is an initial fee for setting up the cheque encashment facility and a minimum charge per transaction.

Carry sufficient travellers cheques (Thomas Cook or American Express or Euro cheques) or hard currency to cover your initial expenses.

If you happen to have lots of cash, you can leave that in the safe at the ACL. Other valuables and belongings such as tickets, certificates, passports etc, can also be kept in the safe.

**11) Climate and clothing**

Alexandria enjoys a typical southern Mediterranean climate of hot, humid summers and cold somewhat wet winters. There is normally no rain from April to October while the months of November and March see sporadic light showers and occasional storms. During December, January and February there is quite heavy rain, wind and occasional storms. Average day temperatures in summer are 85º - 95º and in winter (December-February) 52º – 62º with a marked fall at night.

Normal winter and summer clothing as worn in Britain is suitable, though with much more emphasis on lightweight materials. Despite the average winter temperatures mentioned above, January and February tend to be bleak and with occasional torrential rain, and heavy wind. For these conditions, waterproof shoes, an anorak and a couple of warm sweaters and night clothes are essential.

**12) Dress Code:**

Clothes for women sometimes present problems. Short skirts and clinging clothes will attract attention and should be avoided. Trousers including “jeans” are acceptable. Generally speaking, emphasis is placed on modesty in dress, and local sensibilities in this matter should be respected.

**13) Housing**

Students are responsible for their choice of accommodation depending on their individual budgets and whether they wish to live alone or in shared flats.

Nevertheless ACL will provide students with a varied list of furnished flats at different rents and in different areas and will read contracts for authenticity of terms. ACL will also book hotel rooms for when students first arrive and until they settle in permanent flats.

Please do not seek assistance in finding a flat from people walking in the neighbourhood of the ACL and trying to show you flats here and there.

**14) Local transportation.**

An important advice: Don’t be talked into paying huge amounts in taxis (the yellow and black ones). The best way to avoid argument is to get out of the taxi, hand over the money, and say *shukran*. Always have small change. A couple of two transportation services have started running all over the country offering excellent service at reasonable rates. No bargaining, clean new cars, fixed rates, very punctual and reliable. One company is called "Uber" an international enterprise and an Egyptian one called "Karim" equally good. Details of both will be given on your arrival.

**15) Transport in General.**

Local travel is cheap compared to the UK. At the present time (2016) a 15 minutes taxi journey will cost between 25LE (despite what the driver says most will try to squeeze more out of you!). A Microbus runs up and down the Corniche and costs 2:00 LE for a 10-minute journey. Trains between Alexandria and Cairo run on the hour and cost 35 LE for a one-way second class ticket and 50LE for first class. For longer journeys, to Siwa or Dahab for example, there are public buses. Tickets can be bought from the ticket offices.

This may seem obvious, but take extra care crossing the roads. Traffic travels at high speeds and there is an absence of zebra crossings/trafficlights etc.!

**16) Food and Drink**

Alexandria has many good restaurants, both expensive and inexpensive. Samakmak is a good seafood restaurant in the Anfushi area. Gad for *foul* and *falafel* sandwitshes and Mohamed Ahmed in Ramel station. Must be visited within the first fortnight. The Elite is another experience that should not be missed! Bahari area is packed with fish restaurants. You might also wish to try some (or all) of the following:

1. Chez Gaby: (across from Rio Cinema on Fouad Street) – Pizzas and Italian food (very reasonable).
2. Tekka Grill: Corniche St. – a wide range of salad and selection of meats (wonderful view, buta biton the expensive side.)
3. Fish Market:Corniche St. specialised in serving fish, and Kadoura.
4. Minouche: Pizza shops with home delivery service.
5. Café Selsilla (opposite the Bibliotheca of Alexandrina on the beachfront)
6. Café Ole/Café Casa (Kafr Abdou)
7. The Greek Club famous for fish (overlooking the Corniche)
8. Abou el-Sid (authentic Egyptian eatery)
9. Good number of restaurants and cafes are within walking distance to the ACL.

In addition to the traditional chains of:

1. KFC: More than ten branches throughout the city (if you really must).
2. McDonalds: A number of branches spread over the city (ditto).
3. Pizza Hut:No surprises here (another ditto).

**17) Entertainment and Travelling**

**1. The TV.** Watching local soaps is good for your Egyptian colloquial. Foreign series are shown mainly on Channel 2 usually in the afternoons or late evenings. Satellite channels have a wide variety of channels.

**2. The Cinema.** Mini cinema halls available at Carrefour, San Stephano Mall and Green Plaza.

**3.** **Sports.** The Sporting Club is the place to hang out by the pool when the summer comes, also if you want to play sports. Askfor details about applying for a short–term membership. There are tens of billiard clubs around Alex – girls are advised to go with a male. There is also the Country Club on the Desert Road, has a pool, surrounded by greenery. Nice place.

**4. Travel.** Cairo: Lots to see and do. Refer to a guidebook. You can go there by Superjet, not cheaper but more comfortable, is travelling by train, either 1st class, 2nd class. When you buy a ticket it also reserves you a seat, so check the ticket to see where you should sit. On arrival to Ramses station in Cairo it is easiest to ignore all the taxi drivers and get the Metro (underground) – three stops to

Tahrir Square. Service taxis or minibuses called (Mashrou3) leave from outside Mahatat Misr heading to Cairo or when returning to Alexandria from outside Mahatat Ramses. Not really advisable use it only when necessary.

**El-Alamien:** Two hours there and two hours back. One way to do it is by ordered limousine. Make sure the driver will wait for four hours so that you have time to see all the sites there.

**Siwa oasis:** There are two bus options. One of these is by Superjet, and the East/West Delta line. There are cheaper buses if required. Once in Siwa, hire a bike since this is the easiest way to see the place. The whole trip can be done in four days: two days travelling and two days sightseeing. It is a definite must–see. ACL has organized for such a trip many times and can arrange that upon request.

**Sinai:** Travelling to Sinai via St Catherine’s monastery can be done by bus or in a pre-arranged transportation if around 4 or 5 together. If you plan to stay the night on Mount Sinai take a sleeping bag, jumper, gloves and torch. It’s freezing and dark.

**Luxor and Aswan:** There are two types of train which travel direct to these places from Alexandria. One is a slow, second rate train, while the better, more expensive option, is the tourist overnight train. Book in advance from one of the train stations. Also can fly from Alexandria to Luxor or Aswan.

On to Israel, Jordan or Lebanon: If anyone wants any information on this area, feel free to ask me .I am sure I can provide you with the necessary information.

**18) Sexual harassment**

Public sexual harassment, especially verbal harassment, against foreign/western women is prevalent throughout the Middle East including Egypt. In most cases, it is easiest to IGNORE comments directed at you, and avoid eye contact. The male will focus on the next woman who is passing and will forget about you. It is strongly recommended that you dress conservatively in order not to draw attention ,. Do not sit in the front seat of taxis and avoid closed places (e.g. lift) alone with a male who looks suspicions. Be friendly but always keep a polite respectful distance from the opposite sex in order not to give wrong signals, more details will be given during on site orientation session.

**19) ACL Administration**

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Facebook: Alexandria Centre for Languages

**20) The essence of the year abroad.**

The presence of the ACL in Alexandria is to help students accept the challenge of international living, experience a totally new life style and immerse into the everyday Egyptian culture. It helps them, not just to study the host language and attend academic courses, but also to fully engage with host communities and live the soul of the language. Feel the essence of the language, rather than just learning the language.

**Magda Abou Youssef**

**Program Director**