



Section 5



Practical skills



5.1 Planning a budget and budgeting

Think about

What is a budget?

Why do you need to plan a budget when you are applying for a scholarship?



When you apply for a scholarship you will be asked to submit a budget which will tell the scholarship program how much money you will need to be able to study for one year.

Planning a budget

When you plan your budget you must make sure you include all your expenses. If you forget to include some expenses you will not be able to request them later and you may run out of money.

Even if you are not applying for a scholarship it is good to plan your expenses so you know how much money you will need when you study at university.

What you will need to pay for:

Application costs:

- *You will have to pay an application fee for each university you apply to.*
- *You may be asked to come for an interview or entrance exam. In this case you will need to pay for visa and travel costs, plus accommodation for one or two days.*
- *You may need to provide official translations of your school documents.*

Note – scholarship programs do not usually cover these expenses. If you cannot afford these costs you could consider applying to the Student Support Service's University Application Assistance Scheme.

Academic fees and tuition:

- *Tuition for each semester must be paid in full before the term begins*
- *In addition to tuition fees you will have to pay extra costs such as, a registration fee, air-conditioning fee, and lab fee.*

Books, materials and uniform:

- *Books can be expensive. You can reduce costs by buying second-hand books.*
- *You will need to buy pens and exercise books, plus depending on your course, you may need other equipment.*
- *Some universities require you to wear a uniform.*

Accommodation and living expenses:

- *Accommodation could be in a shared house or apartment with other students, or in a student dorm.*
- *In a house you will need to pay for utilities (water and electricity) and food. Food may be included in dorm costs.*

Travel:

- *Travel from your home in Myanmar to the university.*
- *Local travel from your house to class each day.*

Passports and visas:

- *You will need to get a passport and visa before you travel, plus you will need to maintain the visa throughout the time you are studying.*

Medical insurance:

- *Most universities will require that you purchase medical insurance through the university's hospital program.*

Miscellaneous:

- *There may be other expenses. For example, you might need a computer – note that scholarship programs do not usually cover this.*

Budgeting

Often scholarship programs make their scholarship payments once a year. This means that at the start of the academic year you will be given a large sum of money, which you have to make last for the next twelve months.

When you receive the money it will seem like a very large amount, but remember, it is only enough to cover your education costs and basic living expenses, based on the budget that you submitted with your scholarship application form.

It is very important that you make this money last the full year. If you run out of money the scholarship program will be unlikely send you any more, and you will face many difficulties which may lead to you having to stop studying. If this happens the scholarship program would be very reluctant to offer you a scholarship again.

So, you need to carefully budget your money.



How to budget for a full year

You will have a breakdown of your costs for the year, since you have to prepare and submit this when you apply for the scholarship. Now you need to work out how you should use your money so it will last a full year.

Think about how you will spend your money. Some of your expenses will need to be paid once or twice a year, others will be paid monthly. You need to work out how much you should be spending month by month, and how much you need to keep in your account for later payments of tuition fees.



Practice 1

Look at this sample of a scholarship budget then answer the questions below.

<i>Name</i>		
<i>Course</i>		
<i>Year - 1</i>		
<i>Education fees</i>	<i>Credits- 60 @ 2300B</i>	138,000
	<i>Activity Fees</i>	2,000
	<i>Academic Service Fees</i>	12,000
	<i>Lab fees</i>	4,000
	<i>Other Fees</i>	
	<i>Total fees for one year</i>	156,000
<i>Housing for one year</i>		33,000
<i>Living expenses</i>		39,600
<i>Other Expenses</i>	<i>Books and stationary</i>	14,000
	<i>Equipment</i>	
	<i>Uniform</i>	2,000
	<i>Visa</i>	2,100
	<i>Local travel</i>	7,000
	<i>Field trips / research</i>	5,000
	<i>Medical</i>	2,000
	<i>Academic Activities</i>	4,000
	<i>Total</i>	36,100
<i>TOTAL FOR YEAR</i>		264,700
<i>Personal savings</i>		20,000
<i>Fee Waiver</i>		55,200
<i>Total other funding</i>		75,200
<i>REQUEST</i>		189,500

1. How much money will the student receive from his scholarship?
2. What are his other sources of money?
3. How much money will he have for the whole year?
4. What is the biggest expense he has to pay?
5. How much money does he have for housing AND living expenses for one year?
6. How much money does he have for housing AND living expenses per month?
7. How much can he spend per month on local travel?

Fixed costs and flexible costs

However carefully you plan your budget it is unlikely that your expenses will be exactly as you planned. Some costs might be a bit higher, others a bit lower.

Some costs won't change. These are called **fixed costs**. Fixed costs include tuition fees and visa fees.

Flexible costs are costs that can be changed, for example food and living expenses.

Expenses such as accommodation and travel are flexible since you can decide how much to spend on accommodation rent and how to travel. However, once you have decided how much to spend on rent and move into your accommodation this cost then becomes fixed.



Practice 2

Suppose that when you start at university you discover that the cost of travel is higher than you expected. What could you do?

5.2 Real life accounting



Think about

Have you ever kept financial accounts?

Why is it useful to keep financial accounts?

Now you've worked out how you will spend your money you need to think about how to make sure you stick to your plan.

It is very easy to spend too much money without realising, and then suddenly find you have run out. To prevent this from happening it is useful to keep accounts of your expenses month by month.

Keeping clear accounts will also help you if you have a valid reason for running out of money and want to request a small amount extra. If a scholarship program were to consider giving you extra money they would want to see clearly how you have used your scholarship.

Look at this example of accounts based on the budget above:

	Date	Item	Debit	Credit	Balance
1	1/6/2008	Scholarship		189,500	189,500
2	1/6/2008	Personal saving		20,000	209,500
3	2/6/2008	Rent 1 month plus deposit	5,200		204,300
4	2/6/2008	Food and living supplies	550		203,750
5	4/6/2008	Tuition fees – 30 credits (inc fee waiver)	41,400		162,350
6	4/6/2008	Lab fees	4,000		158,350
7	4/6/2008	Academic service fees	12,000		146,350
8	4/6/2008	Travel to university and back	20		146,330
9	5/6/2008	Uniform	1,200		145,130
10	6/6/2008	Note books and pens	150		144,980
11	7/6/2008	Vegetables	75		144,905

This student has a clear record of how much money he is spending and what he is spending it on. The **debit** column is where he writes all his expenses, and the **credit** column is where he writes money that he receives. The **balance** column contains a running total of how much money he has remaining.

This method of recording expenses is good for showing how much money you have left. But it doesn't show you if you are spending too much of one particular expense. For example, it won't tell you if you are spending too much money on food or local travel.

One way to check this is too keep a record of how much you spend each month on each expense.

For example:

Item	Amount for year	June	July	August	Remaining
<i>Credits- 60 @ 2300B</i>	82,800	41,400	0	0	41,400
<i>Activity Fees</i>	2,000	400	0	0	1,600
<i>Academic Service Fees</i>	12,000	12,000	0	0	0
<i>Lab fees</i>	4,000	4,000	0	0	0
<i>Housing for one year</i>	33,000	5,200	2,930	2,970	21,900
<i>Living expenses</i>	39,600	4,700	3,900	4,050	26,950
<i>Books and stationary</i>	14,000	540	325	895	12,240
<i>Uniform</i>	2,000	1,460	0	0	540
<i>Visa</i>	2,100	2,100	0	0	0
<i>Local travel</i>	7000	460	470	470	5,600
<i>Field trips / research</i>	5,000	0	800	0	4,200
<i>Medical</i>	2,000	0	0	89	1,911
<i>Academic Activities</i>	4,000	0	350	500	3,150
<i>Total</i>	209,500	72,260	8,775	8,974	119,491

To create this kind of record you need to add a new column each month, in front of the **Remaining** column, and insert that month's expenses. This type of record allows you to see how much you have remaining of each expense and whether you are overspending.



Practice 1

Look at the accounts record above and answer the following questions:

1. Has the student spent too much, the right amount, or less than he could, on living expenses?
2. Has the student spent too much, the right amount, or less than he could, on housing?
3. Which line items has the student spent less than the budget?
4. What adjustments does the student need to make to his spending?



Practice 2

Complete the balance column of the expenses record below; then complete the monthly expenses table below that.

	Date	Item	Debit	Credit	Balance
1	1/6/2008	Scholarship		189,500	
2	1/6/2008	Personal saving		20,000	
3	2/6/2008	Rent 1 month plus deposit	5,600		
4	2/6/2008	Food and living supplies	500		
5	4/6/2008	Tuition fees – 30 credits (inc fee waiver)	43,200		
6	4/6/2008	Lab fees	4,000		
7	4/6/2008	Academic service fees	12,000		
8	4/6/2008	Travel to university and back	40		
9	5/6/2008	Uniform	1,000		
10	6/6/2008	Note books and pens	300		
11	7/6/2008	Vegetables	95		
12	10/6/2008	Food	375		
13	12/6/2008	Test books	2,500		
14	13/6/2008	Vegetables	125		
15	14/6/2008	Food and living supplies	1,500		
16	14/6/2008	Local travel for one week	120		
17	16/6/2008	Text book	560		
18	18/6/2008	Vegetables	100		
19	21/6/2008	Food	700		
20	21/6/2008	Local travel for one week	120		
21	23/6/2008	Stationary	60		
22	25/6/2008	Food	250		
23	28/6/2008	Local travel for one week	140		
24	29/6/2008	Vegetables	50		
25	30/6/2008	Water and electricity	540		

Item	Amount for year	June	Remaining
<i>Credits- 60 @ 2300B</i>	82,800		
<i>Activity Fees</i>	2,000		
<i>Academic Service Fees</i>	12,000		
<i>Lab fees</i>	4,000		
<i>Housing for one year</i>	33,000		
<i>Living expenses</i>	39,600		
<i>Books and stationary</i>	14,000		
<i>Uniform</i>	2,000		
<i>Visa</i>	2,100		
<i>Local travel</i>	7000		
<i>Field trips / research</i>	5,000		
<i>Medical</i>	2,000		
<i>Academic Activities</i>	4,000		
<i>Total</i>	209,500		

Keeping this kind of accounts record may seem like a lot of extra work, especially when you have reading and assignments to do, but it can help you budget your money. Plus, being able to keep accounts is a good skill to have – in your future career you may have to keep accounts, or at least record your personal work expenses.

5.3 Passports and visas

Think about

What is the process for applying for a passport?

What is a visa and why do you need one?



What is a passport?

A **passport** is a document issued by a national government, to identify the holder as a citizen of the issuing country.

A passport confirms the identity and nationality of the holder. It allows the holder to travel abroad and to return to the country which issued the passport.

The standard format includes:

- The passport cover with the name of the issuing country, a national symbol, and a description of the document (passport, official passport, diplomatic passport).
- Inside, a title page, also naming the country, and a data page, on which there is information about the bearer and the issuing authority.
- Blank pages available for foreign countries to affix visas, and to stamp for entries and exits.

When do you need a passport?

You need a passport to gain entry into to the country you are visiting and to re-gain entry into your own country.

Applying for a passport

Obtaining a passport takes time, possibly several months if offices are busy. Many people in Myanmar find it useful to hire an agent who, for a fee, can give them advice and possibly make the application process faster. Agents vary in quality and therefore have different results; consider your agent carefully if you decide to use one.

To apply for a passport in Myanmar:

1. You need your ID card and house registration document.
2. If you are over 18 make sure you have changed your ID card to the adult ID card.
3. Get Form 17 from the police station at your place of birth.
4. Go to the passport office in Yangon and apply for the passport.
5. At the passport office complete the application form and have your passport photo taken at the office. Make sure you bring your household registration document, ID card and form 17.
6. The passport office will give you a slip and an appointment date to collect your passport.
7. Go to the bank and complete the bank form to pay the fee for your passport.
8. Get form 19 – before you go to collect your passport.
9. Collect your passport from the passport office.

** Note: This process may change. Double check the application process before applying for your passport.*

**Note – Officials can make mistakes when completing forms, which can result in you having different dates or spellings on your documents. You should check all the details on your ID, house registration and Form 17 match before you go to Yangon to apply for the passport. (see 3.5 – Names and date of birth)*

What is a visa?

A visa is an endorsement stamped into your passport by officials of a foreign country, which allows you to visit that country. It is often necessary to apply for a visa before you wish to travel.

Some countries have agreements so that their citizens can visit other countries without needing a visa. But for Burmese passport holders most countries require you to have a visa to gain entry.

A visa is issued at a country's embassy or consulate (see below). Even if you are granted a visa, immigration officials at your port of arrival still have the right to refuse you entry.

Understanding visas

Your visa will either be a stamp or a piece of paper attached to your passport. It will contain your name and passport number. The visa also includes a visa number, the date of issue and the date of expiry of the visa, and where the visa was issued.

The type of visa will be stated and the number of entries you are entitled to. Your visa may be a **single entry**. This means you can enter to host country one time on the visa. It is possible to apply for **double entry** and **multiple entry** visas, though these are more expensive.

When you are issued with a visa you should always check to make sure the information on it is correct. Sometimes the visa section may make a mistake. If you have a mistake on your visa immigration in the host country might not accept your visa.

There are many different types of visas depending on the country and type and length of visit.

Types of visa include:

- Transit - some countries require that visitors have a visa even if you are only stopping in that country briefly on your way to another country. If you are travelling by flight, and will stop in a country on route, you should always check with the airline to see whether a Burmese passport holder needs a transit visa.
- Tourist - a tourist visa allows the individual to visit the host country for a short time. The length of time varies from country to country. You are not allowed to work if you are holding a tourist visa.
- Non-immigrant - a non-immigrant visa allows the individual to visit the host country temporarily for a given length of time. (Some countries also issue this to tourists instead of issuing separate tourist visas.)
- Immigrant - an immigrant visa is for someone who intends to live and work permanently in the host country. Normally, to be able to do this you need to have relatives or employment in the host country.
- Education - an education visa is for those who wish to study in the host country. (In some countries education is included in the non-immigrant visa.) To be able to apply for this visa the applicant needs to have been offered a place at a recognised educational institution.
- Business - people who wish to do business or work in the host country need a business visa. To apply for this visa the employer in the host country needs to submit an application. (In some countries a business visa is included in the non-immigrant visa)



Check your understanding

What type of visa would these people need to apply for?

1. Someone who wants to visit the host country for a three week holiday.
2. Someone who will work in a company in the host country.
3. Someone who is going to study the host country's language for six months.
4. Someone who has to stop in the country while travelling to a third country.
5. Someone who will go to live permanently with their family in the host country.

5.4 Applying for a visa

Think about

*What type of visa will you need to study in another country?
How do you apply for a visa?*



How to find out which visa you need

When you travel to another country it is important that you have the correct visa. If you want to study you must make sure you have a visa that allows you to study, otherwise you might be asked to stop studying or to leave the country.

Every country has a visa website that provides information about the types of visas issued. You should check the website of the country you have chosen to study in BEFORE applying to your chosen university, to make sure you will be eligible for a visa. If you are unsure from the website you can phone the Visa Section of the host country's embassy or consulate.

When you are ready to apply for the visa you need to find out what is required to make the application. If you submit your application without all the required documents your visa will not be issued.

Requirements vary depending on the nationality of passport holders. Remember to make sure the information is relevant to people travelling on Myanmar passports.

** Note – Foreign embassies in Myanmar often do not have websites. It is possible to find their addresses and phone numbers on the internet but not embassy information.*

Education visa requirements

Example: Thailand

Name of visa - Non-Immigrant ED

*Documents required - Valid passport that does not expire before end of intended stay / not less than 6 months
- Letter from admissions department of registered institution where you have registered as a student – with letter head
- Completed and signed application form
- Two passport-size photos (2” x 2”)
- Processing fees*

Validity of visa - Usually 3 months, then extended annually at the immigration office in Thailand

Issuing time - 2 working days

Research Practice

You need access to the internet for this activity.

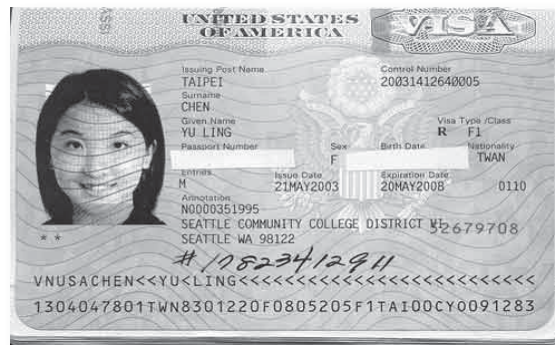
Find the same visa information as above for Hong Kong and the Philippines. Try to search by yourself first, but if you cannot find the information there are some tips on searching in the answer section.

The Philippines

1. Name of visa
2. Documents required
3. Validity of visa
4. Visa issuing time

Hong Kong

1. Name of visa
2. Documents required
3. Validity of visa
4. Visa issuing time



** Note: It is important that you arrive with correct visa. Most countries do not allow visitors to change their visa in the host country. If you arrive with a tourist visa you will have to leave the country, apply for the correct visa, then return.*

Visas and Work

One way to supplement your scholarship while at university is to work part-time. It is not always possible to do this – some countries do not allow you to work if you have a student visa, or your university schedule may not give you enough free time to work. But for some students this will be an option.

If you are thinking of working while at university check with the embassy or immigration department of your host country to make sure you are allowed to work, and if there are any limitations on the work you are allowed to do.

In May 2008 policy in Hong Kong relaxed its immigration policies to allow international students to work while they are at university. However, work is limited to internships, part-time on campus work, and summer jobs. Part-time work is limited to 10 hours per week during term-time.

5.5 Embassies and consulates

Think about

*What is the difference between an embassy and a consulate?
Who works in an embassy?*



An **Embassy** is a permanent diplomatic mission. It is also the building in which that mission is housed.

Embassies are an important part of foreign relations since they serve as a contact point between the visiting and host nation. Through an embassy, countries can reach resolutions to problems. Typically, an embassy is staffed by representatives of the foreign service of the visiting nation, and it is housed in a permanent structure which includes staff housing, offices, and spaces for public functions.

Three primary types of staff can be found in an embassy, along with administrative support staff.

- **Consular officers** deal with things like issuing visas and handling issues which arise for travellers while they are abroad.
- **Political officers** are responsible for following the political climate in the host nation and issuing reports to their home government.
- **Economic officers** handle economic negotiations such as disputes over taxes and tariffs.

Together, the staff of the embassy is headed by an **ambassador**.

In cases of dispute, it is common for a country to recall its head of mission (ambassador) as a sign of its displeasure. This is less drastic than cutting diplomatic relations completely, and the mission will still continue operating more or less normally.

The diplomats or envoys which make up an embassy enjoy special privileges because of their status as political negotiators. These privileges are also extended to embassies, which are usually accorded *extraterritoriality*, which means that the host nation cannot enter the premises of the embassy without being specifically invited.

A **Consulate** is similar to (but not the same as) a diplomatic office, but with focus on dealing with individual persons and businesses. A Consulate or Consulate-General is generally a representative of the Embassy in locations outside of the capital city. The person in charge of a consulate or consulate-general is known as a consul or consul-general, respectively. (*Wikipedia*)

Research Practice

You will need the internet for this activity. Practice searching on the internet for the websites of the embassies of countries you may be interested in studying.

What information do these websites provide?

5.6 Services provided by embassies

Think about

What services are provided by an embassy?

How can you find out information about embassies?

Research Practice

You need the internet for this activity.

Use a search engine to find the website for the Singapore embassy in Yangon, then find the answers to the questions below.

1. What services are provided by the Embassy for people from Singapore?
2. What services are provided by the Embassy for people from Myanmar?
3. What are the operational hours of the embassy?
4. What are the times for applying for / collecting visas?

The activity above should give you some idea of the services provided by embassies. The services are provided by the Consular Section, which looks after the interests of people from the country of the Embassy.

The Embassy can offer help such as:

- *issuing replacement passports.*
- *birth and death registrations.*
- *providing information about transferring funds.*
- *providing appropriate help if you have suffered serious assault, are the victim of other crime, or are in hospital.*
- *providing details of local lawyers, interpreters, and doctors.*
- *offering support and help in a range of other cases, such as child abductions, the death of a relative overseas, missing people and kidnapping.*
- *contacting family or friends for you if you want.*
- *making special arrangements in cases of terrorism, civil disturbances or natural disasters.*

But an Embassy cannot:

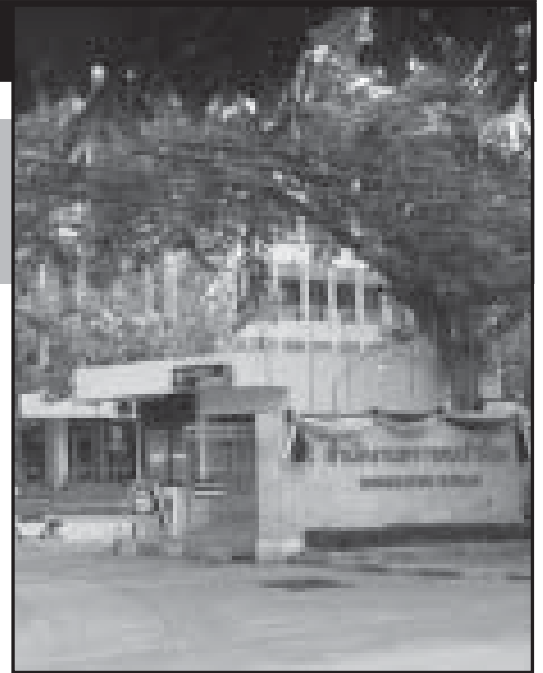
- *get you out of prison, prevent the local authorities from deporting you after your prison sentence, or interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings.*
- *interfere in another country's immigration policy or procedures.*
- *give you legal advice, investigate crimes or carry out searches for missing people.*
- *get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to Thai nationals.*
- *pay any bills or give you any money (in very exceptional circumstances we may lend you some money, from public funds, which you will have to pay back).*
- *make travel arrangements for you, or find you work or accommodation.*

5.7 Immigration issues

Think about

What is immigration?

What happens if you overstay in the host country?



What is immigration?

1. Immigration has more than one meaning. For example, immigration can mean 'going to live permanently in another country'.

2. Immigration also refers to the department where officials check the documents of people travelling internationally (at airports or border crossings). This is often also called passport control.

3. Immigration also means the government department that deals with foreigners visiting the country.

Maintaining visas in host countries

If you study in Thailand you will have to make regular visits to the immigration office in order to maintain your visa. Unlike the Philippines, Thailand does not issue a visa for the duration of your course. You have to extend your visa every year.

The reason Thailand (and other countries) does this is that it wants to make sure that people who come to their country on a student visa are really studying. When you need to extend your visa you will probably have to show documentation that proves you are studying. Often the extension has to be done on your behalf by the university.

Overstaying

You should make sure you do not **overstay**. Overstaying means staying longer than the date on your visa. Different countries have different penalties for overstaying. Often it is a heavy fine, the amount of the fine depending on the length of time that you overstay.

? What do you think?

What should you do if you realise you have overstayed your visa?

5.8 International travel

Think about

*Have you ever travelled to another country?
What are the procedures of booking and travelling
by air?*



You've been accepted at a university! You've been offered a scholarship! You know when you need to arrive in your host country! Now you need to arrange your travel.

Don't leave this to the last minute because flights might be full.

Booking a flight

The best way to book a flight is through a travel agent. Usually ticket prices are cheaper if you book through a travel agent than if you book directly with the airline.

You need to tell the travel agent where you want to go and the dates you wish to travel. Also, tell the agent if you are looking for a cheap airfare.

There is a lot of variation in the costs to fly with different airlines. This is because some airlines have newer aircraft and offer a better service than others. If you book with a budget airline the price will be much cheaper, but the service may not be so good, or it might be more likely that the flight is delayed.

The travel agent should be able to suggest several flights to you and you can decide which one you want.

Airlines that fly from Yangon include:

Thai Airways

Myanmar Airways International

Silk Air

Malaysia Airlines

Indian Airlines

Biman Bangladesh Airways

Bangkok Airways

Air Asia

Phuket Air

Air China – to Kunming

Air Mandalay – to Chiang Mai

Both Air Asia and Phuket Air are budget airlines flying to Thailand.

To fly to Hong Kong or the Philippines you would need to fly to another airport, such as Bangkok, Kunming or Singapore, then transfer to another flight.

When the travel agent gives you information about flights he will give you a **flight itinerary**. This contains information such as the dates and times of the flights, the departure and arrival airports, the length of the flight, the flight number, and the airline.



Practice

Look at this sample flight itinerary and answer the questions below:

PASSENGER(S):

TICKET NUMBER(S):

DATE	FLIGHT INFO	FROM	TO	DEP	ARR	TRAVEL
10JUN TUE	THAI AIRWAYS I TG 624 M	BANGKOK SUARNABHUMI I	MANILA NINOY AQUINO	1515	1930	DURATION 3:15
ECONOMY CLASS		TERMINAL I1		NON STOP		
NON SMOKING						
AIRBUS INDUSTRIE A300-600/600C						
MEAL						
RESERVATION CONFIRMED						
24JUL THU	THAI AIRWAYS I TG 621 M	MANILA NINOY AQUINO I	BANGKOK SUARNABHUMI INTL	1430	1635	DURATION 3:05
ECONOMY CLASS		TERMINAL I1		NON STOP		
NON SMOKING						
BOEING 777-200/200ER						
MEAL						
RESERVATION CONFIRMED						

1. What is the date of the return flight?
2. What is the name of the airport in Manila?
3. What is the name of the airport in Bangkok?
4. What time does the outward flight arrive in Manila?
5. What is the duration of the return flight?
6. Why is the arrival time of the outward flight 4hours 15 minutes after the departure time, but the flight time is only 3 hours 15 minutes?

Understanding air tickets and flight bookings

If you think you know which flight you want, but you are not quite sure, you can ask the travel agent to make a **reservation**. This means the travel agent can hold a seat on a flight for you. But the agent can only hold the seat for one or two days, then you have to pay for the flight or lose the seat.

When you pay for the flight the travel agent will **book** your seat and issue you with a ticket for the flight. You can usually change the date of the flight if you need to, though some airlines will ask you to pay some money to change the flight.

If the date that you want to fly is already full the travel agent may offer to **wait list** you for another flight. This means you are on a waiting list, and if a seat becomes available the agent will book it for you. If this is not possible you will need to fly on a different day.

Do you need a **one-way** or a **return** ticket? If you are going to study you will probably need a one-way ticket, and then will need to buy another ticket when you have completed your course. However, if you plan to return to Myanmar during your holidays a return ticket would be cheaper.

You can buy return tickets with different **validity**. You could buy a ticket that is valid for one month, three months or one year. If you are buying a return ticket make sure the validity doesn't expire before you plan to return.

Preparing to travel

- *Information* – Find out all the information you need to know before you travel. Be sure you know your flight code and departure time. Find out the **time difference** between Myanmar and your host country.

Make sure you know the address of where you will be staying in your host country – *you will have to fill in a form during your journey that requires this information.*

- *Foreign currency* – if possible it is good to have some money in the currency of the country you are travelling to, to pay for taxi fares etc when you arrive. If you can't get foreign currency before you leave you will be able to change money in the arrival airport. But remember, often the currency exchanges in airports do not offer good exchange rates, so it is better not to change all your money there.

It is a good idea to research the exchange rate before you leave.

- *Luggage* – There are two types of luggage you can take on a plane, a **carry-on bag** and **checked** luggage.

A **carry-on bag** is a small bag or backpack that you can take on to the plane with you. It should contain the things you need for the flight or things that are valuable and you don't want to lose.

Checked luggage is the luggage that is put in a separate compartment on the plane. You collect this luggage when you arrive at the destination airport. This luggage contains everything you need – except for the items in your carry-on luggage.

Things you should take in the carry-on bag:

Passport

Acceptance letter from your university

Addresses and contact phone numbers

Ticket

Money

Travel insurance

Things you might want to take in the carry-on bag:

Camera

Reading material

Something warm to wear (planes can be cold)

Music player

Toothbrush

Things you CANNOT take in the carry-on bag:

Sharp items – knives, scissors, nail clippers, needles etc

Flammable liquids, aerosols

Any kind of weapon (even toy weapons)

On some flights you cannot take liquids, creams or lotions, or you can only take them in small bottles (100ml or less). Check with the travel agent when you book your flight to see what you can take in your carry-on bag.

It is important that your luggage does not exceed the **weight allowance**. This is the amount of weight you are allowed to take with you on the flight. There are two weight allowances – one for checked luggage, which is usually 20 or 30 kilograms, and one for your carry-on bag. The weight allowance varies between airlines *and is usually written on your flight ticket*.

Your friends may tell you not to worry about the weight allowance, and that they know people who took far more luggage than they should, with no problem. This happens sometimes if you are lucky. But if you are not lucky you will be asked to leave some luggage behind, or pay an extra charge for the extra weight, which can be expensive.

- *What to wear* – studies have shown that people who are dressed smartly when they travel get treated better by airport officials. As someone coming from Myanmar it is likely you will face more scrutiny when you travel than people from other countries. So it is advisable to dress smartly when you travel!



Check your understanding

Ko Zaw Min was preparing for his flight to Malaysia. He packed a suitcase and a large bag. The luggage in the suitcase weighed 38 kilograms. He put all his money and his passport safely in his suitcase. His carry on bag contained things he would need for the trip, including his nail clippers and a handy penknife.

What did Ko Zaw Min do wrong?

Travelling

DEPARTURE

In Myanmar, before you leave the country you have to obtain a D form, which you take with you to the airport.

Airport Vocabulary

Arrival area	- the area where people exit the airport after they have arrived at their destination
Baggage claim	- the area where you collect your luggage after the flight
Boarding	- getting on the plane
Boarding call	- announcement over the loud speaker system that it is time to board the plane
Check-in	- confirming your seat and giving your checked luggage to the airline on arrival at the departure airport
Customs	- a check you pass through before leaving the arrival airport to make sure you are not bringing anything illegal into the country
Delay	- the flight will leave later than the stated time
Departure area	- area where you wait before getting on the plane
Economy class	- the cheapest seating area on the plane
Gates	- the door you use to enter and exit the plane, usually identified by numbers
Immigration	- where your passport is checked and stamped, both on departure and arrival
Terminal	- the main building of the airport
Transfer	- changing planes
Transit	- at an airport between departure and arrival where you are changing planes

Be sure to arrive at the airport in time for your flight. This is usually one hour before the flight for domestic (within the country) flights, and two or three hours before international (to another country) flights.

Keep your luggage with you!

When you travel it is very important that you keep your luggage with you at all times until you check-in. One reason is thieves. Another reason is that it is easy for someone to slip something into your bag. This could be something illegal that they are hoping to be able to smuggle into the country in your bag. It is advisable to use locks on your checked-in luggage.

• Step 1

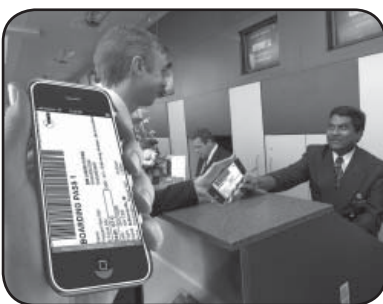
When you arrive at the departure airport you have to *check in*.

- You need to find the check-in desk for your airline and destination.
- Give your ticket and passport to the agent, and put your checked-in luggage on the platform next to the desk to be weighed.
- A tag will be put on your luggage stating your destination. If your luggage is over-weight you may be asked to pay some extra money.
- The agent will process your ticket. They may ask you if you want a seat near the window or the aisle. Then they will give you a **boarding pass** which will tell you the time you need to board the plane and which gate you need to go to.



• Step 2

After you have finished checking-in, you keep your carry-on bag with you, and your passport and boarding pass handy, and proceed to *immigration*.



- At immigration give your passport to the immigration official. If he/she asks to see anything else (such as the acceptance letter of your university) show that too.
- The immigration official may ask you some questions about the information on your passport. Answer the questions politely.
- The immigration official will stamp an exit stamp on your passport.
- Once you have passed through immigration you have officially left the country. You **CANNOT** go back to the other part of the airport.

• Step 3

Next you will go through *security screening* (although the location of this can vary between airports). Both you and your carry on bag will be screened to make sure you don't have anything that you shouldn't.

- You might need to show your passport and boarding pass.

- You will be asked to put your carry on bag, mobile phone, and any metal objects such as your watch or money, on a belt that goes through an x-ray machine. (Some countries even ask you to take off your shoes!)

- You will have to walk through an arch that has a metal detector in it. It will beep if you are carrying anything metal, and an official will check you.

- Sometimes an official may want to look in your bag. They may have seen something on the x-ray that looks strange and they want to check what it is.



• Step 4

You are now in the *departure area* and need to proceed to your *gate* to board the plane. Even though you have been given a gate number and boarding time it is good to check again on the *information board* – sometimes gates and boarding times change. Sometimes the flights are *delayed*.

- Wait in the boarding area until the **boarding call** is made. This announcement will tell you it is time to board the plane.

- Proceed to your gate and wait in the queue. When you go through the gate you will need to show your passport and boarding pass again. Then you will get on the plane.



ON THE PLANE

The flight attendants will help you to find your seat. Your seat number will be on your boarding pass.

Once you have found your seat you must store your carry-on bag in the **overhead luggage compartment**, or under the seat in front of you – take out anything you might want during take-off.

Before take-off, the flight attendants will either demonstrate or show a video about the safety equipment and procedures. There is also a card in the seatback pocket which explains some of the same information in writing and pictures. Following is a lot of what they will tell you:

- You must wear your **seat belt** during takeoff and landing. It is a good idea to wear it during the flight, but you don't have to. On occasion during the flight you will be asked to put on your seatbelts, especially if the plane is experiencing **turbulence**. Again, turbulence is normal, and nothing to worry about.



- There are also seatbelt lights above your head. When the light is illuminated, you are supposed to wear your seatbelt. At other times you can take it off.
- There is a **life vest** under your seat. The life vest is what you use if you land in the water; it helps you stay afloat. It is very unlikely that you will use this.
- There are **oxygen masks** in the overhead bins. If there is a loss of **cabin pressure** these masks will drop down and you put them on to get good fresh air. Again, it is very unlikely that you will use these.

Once the flight attendants have finished explaining the safety procedures the plane should be ready for take off. Make sure you are wearing your seat belt, your seat is in an upright position, and your table is closed. Switch off your mobile phone for the duration of the flight.

During the flight you will be offered refreshments – though this depends on the length of your flight and the airline. Budget airlines may ask you to pay for refreshments. If you are on a long flight make sure you drink lots of water! The air-conditioning on the plane can make you dehydrated.

Remember, you are not allowed to smoke on the plane – even in the toilets! If you are caught smoking you will have to pay a very high fine.

Near the end of your flight you will be given an **arrival card** and maybe a **customs declaration form**. You need to complete these before you reach immigration in your arrival airport (see below).

ARRIVAL

When the plane lands, you will be asked to stay in your seat with your seatbelt fastened. The plane will taxi to the gate. When the plane stops moving, you can stand up and get your bags and other belongings.

• Step 1

As you enter the terminal, look for the signs for *immigration, baggage claim and customs.*

- First you will pass through **immigration**. You will need to show your passport and **arrival card**. Have your university acceptance letter handy too in case the immigration official asks to see it.
- As with the previous immigration the official may ask you some questions. Answer the questions politely – remember you are a guest in their country.
- The immigration official will put an entry stamp in your passport with a date on it. You must leave the country or extend your visa on or before that date, so make sure you look at the date.

• Step 2

After immigration you will go to the *baggage claim* area. You need to find which *belt* your luggage will come out on. There should be a sign that lists flight numbers and belt numbers.

Make sure you get your own bags! This may sound silly, but sometimes people have the same kind of bags as you. Check the label on your bag. (You could also put your own label on the bag before you depart).

- **Step 3**

Once you have your bags proceed to *customs*. There are usually two *channels*; a green channel with signs saying *Nothing to Declare*, and a red channel with signs saying *Goods to Declare*.

- Unless you have large quantities of money, alcohol or cigarettes it is unlikely you will have anything to declare. There will be a section on the **customs declaration form** that tells you what you need to declare.
- As you go through customs the customs agent will collect your customs declaration form if you have one.
- The agent may ask to search your bags. Most people don't get searched but the agent will choose people at random to search. This is inconvenient because it takes time and you will have to repack your bag afterwards, but be patient.
- Once you are through customs you will be in the arrival area. Here you can change money if necessary and find transport to your accommodation.

Transfers

It is possible that you will need to make a **transfer** during your flight. This means you will need to change planes at an airport somewhere between Yangon and your destination. While you are at this airport you can say you are **in transit**.

At check-in

If you are transferring you will probably be given two boarding passes when you **check-in** at the departure airport. If you are not given two passes you may have to check-in again at the airport where you transfer, ask the check-in agent if you are not sure.

Ask the check-in agent if your bags are **checked through** to your destination. This means that at the transit airport the airport staff will put your luggage on the second plane, so you do not need to worry about it until you reach your destination. Most airports do this.

At the transit airport

- When you arrive at the transit airport you will leave the plane, taking your belongings with you. Keep your boarding pass and passport handy.
- Once you are off the plane look for signs that tell you which gate you need to go to for your next flight, and what time the next flight will board. Make sure you are looking at the signs for **departures**. If you are confused ask the airport employees for help.
- There will be signs saying **transfers** or **transit passengers**, to tell you where to go.
- When it is time to board you will need to follow the same process as boarding for the first flight.

Sometimes the connecting flight leaves quite soon after you arrive at the airport. Then you might need to hurry to the boarding gate. Other times there may be a few hours between flights, in which case you would have time to wander around the shops.

* DO NOT follow the signs saying **exit** or **immigration** if you are in transit. These will take you out of the airport.

- **Completing departure and arrival cards**

You will usually be given an **Arrival / Departure card** during your flight.

* *Note – if you are transferring you only need the arrival / departure card for the destination country, NOT the country where you transfer.*

You need to complete the **arrival section** of this card before you go through immigration at your arrival airport. (You don't fill out the departure section until you leave the host country).

The information required on the card includes:

- *Name*
- *Date of birth*
- *Nationality*
- *Passport number and date*
- *Visa number and date*
- *How long you will stay in the country*
- *The reason for your visit*
- *Profession*
- *Address in home country*
- *Address of accommodation on arrival - Make sure you have this. Immigration will ask you if you leave this section blank.*

When you pass through immigration the immigration officer will take the arrival card and leave the **departure section** in your passport. Don't lose the departure section, you will need to hand it in when you leave the country.

Finally, airports have a lot of signs and a lot of staff who are there to help travellers. If you are unsure where you are supposed to go read the signs, or ask the staff for help, and you will be fine.

5.9 Health insurance

Think about

What is health insurance?

Why is it a good idea to have health insurance while you are at university?

If you are a foreigner living in another country and you become sick you will need to pay for any medical treatment that you need. This can be expensive, and most students cannot afford these costs.

It is therefore, a very good idea to take out health insurance. In fact some universities may require that you have health insurance for the time you are studying at university, and can help you take out health insurance.

What is health insurance?

Health insurance is a way to protect yourself from having to pay lots of money on medical costs if you become sick and need medical treatment.

When you take out health insurance you fill out a form with your personal details, submit a photocopy of your passport, and pay an amount of money, to the insurance company. Your insurance will usually protect you for one year.

If you become sick, and you need to be treated at a hospital or clinic that is recognised by the insurance company, the company will cover most of the cost of your treatment. This can include doctor's fees, medicine, tests, surgery and hospital stays.

What must you do if you become sick?

If you become sick and want to claim on insurance you must make sure that the hospital or clinic is recognised by the insurance company.

When you arrive at the hospital or clinic show them your health insurance card – they can tell you if the insurance company recognises them or not.

You have to pay for all the medical and hospital costs first, the insurance company refunds the money later.

You must make sure that you keep all the receipts of your treatment. You will also **need** a doctor's letter stating what was wrong with you. You need to send these documents to the insurance company to make your claim.

Instructions on how to make a claim will be included with your policy information.

How much will the insurance company pay?

The amount that the insurance company pays depends on two things:

- 1. The type of policy you have.*

Insurance companies offer different policies, some more expensive than others. The more expensive policies agree to pay more money than the cheaper policies. All policies have a maximum limit (and a minimum limit).

- 2. The cost of your treatment.*

Insurance companies usually refund the cost of your treatment, minus a minimum amount. This means that if the cost of the treatment is less than the minimum amount you will not be refunded any money. If your treatment is very expensive, you may not be paid the full amount.

What is not covered by the insurance?

Some things are not covered by health insurance. For example, you cannot claim for the cost of a health check if there is nothing wrong with you.

Most insurance companies will not pay if you injure yourself through a dangerous sport, or riding a motorcycle.

Also any long term illness that you already have will not be covered by the insurance.

How much does insurance cost?

The cost of insurance can vary greatly. You can buy cheap insurance, which allows you to be treated in cheaper hospitals, or you can buy more expensive treatment which allows you to be treated at the expensive international hospitals.



Check your understanding

Which of these are covered by standard health insurance? Write *yes* or *no*.

1. Doctor's fee and cost of medicine to treat an ear infection.
2. A check up with a dentist.
3. A routine health check.
4. A stay in hospital after you break your leg falling down the stairs.
5. A stay in hospital after you break your leg falling off a motorcycle.
6. Hospital treatment for Dengue fever.
7. Treatment for a health problem you have had since birth.
8. An eye test and purchase of a pair of glasses.

5.10 Culture shock

Think about

Have you ever experienced culture shock?

Do you find it difficult to understand the different cultures in Myanmar?

Culture shock is a term used to describe some of these more pronounced reactions to being in a culture very different from your own. Culture shock can be characterized by periods of frustration, anxiety, confusion, and even depression. Many people experience culture shock when they visit another country. For some these feelings are quite mild, for others they are very strong.

What causes culture shock?

Culture shock is caused by unfamiliarity with the new country, inability to speak the language, and not knowing how to behave in an unfamiliar culture. Not only is the language different, but gestures, facial expressions, and traditions are also different.

Common Signs & Symptoms of Culture Shock

Anxiety, depression or anger

Confusion and loneliness

Loss of appetite, changes in sleep patterns, tearfulness

Lack of energy, loss of enjoyment in daily activities, withdrawal from others

Headaches or stomach pains

What are the stages of culture shock?

There are four stages of culture adjustment, though each lasts a different length of time for every individual who experiences it. In general, the stages are:

Stage 1

Often called the 'honeymoon phase', during the first stage, foreign visitors often feel excited. The new country is interesting, the people are friendly and helpful, and the future looks promising.

Stage 2

Problems! School, language, shopping — everything is difficult. Things that were simple back home require more effort in the new country. It seems hard to make friends, and at this point, foreign visitors may begin to believe that the local people are unfriendly. Homesickness begins, and along with it complaints about the new country. This is the stage we hear referred to as “culture shock.”

Stage 3

Recovery. The foreign visitor begins to use the language, so communication with locals becomes easier. Customs and traditions become clearer, and slowly the situation passes from impossible to hopeful. Minor misunderstandings which were stressful in stage 2 become manageable.

Stage 4

Stability. Eventually foreign visitors begin to feel more at home in the new country. Things they do not like about their new country no longer makes them so dissatisfied and unhappy. Life has settled down, and they are now able to find humour in the situations in which they find themselves.

Some people experience ‘reverse culture shock’. This means that when they return to their home country they find it difficult to settle back into their own culture, missing the culture they had lived in.

Experienced travellers tend to cope much better with the difficulties of travel, this is because they are used to experiencing different cultures.

Coping with culture shock

Read about the country you are going to and its culture before departing. This way, the country and its people are more familiar upon arrival. You will be aware of the differences in the new country and are thus better prepared to deal with them when possible.

Be aware of the culture shock you are experiencing. Recognise that it is a stage many people go through. Talk to friends if you are feeling lonely or missing home.

Try not to be offended, or to offend the locals; to do this familiarise yourself with local customs and language before you leave.

Be open-minded about the culture you visit. Don't constantly compare it to your own culture.

Keep busy. Don't stay at home feeling miserable. Join a student organisation such as a sport or study group.

Talk to an international student advisor.

Make an effort to experience different aspects of the culture. Try the food, visit places, chat with locals.

Take ‘time out’ or rest apart from the culture sometimes, and to spend time with people from your own country.

Keep your sense of humour. Anyone who has lived in another country has funny and/or embarrassing stories. You are not alone. Laughing at these situations can ease the tension.

The importance of understanding and respecting different cultures

Think about

Why is it important to respect the culture of your host country?

How would you feel if a visitor to Myanmar did not respect your culture?

If you travel to another country it is important to remember that you are a guest in that country. You need to behave in a way that is acceptable to the host country, even if it is not how you would normally behave in your own country.

It is advisable before you travel to find out about your host country's culture and customs. Find out what you should and should not do, and what might upset or offend people.

Take time once you're in the host country to learn more about the culture. It will help you to get a better understanding of the people who live in the country. The better you understand people from different cultures the easier it is to work together and be friends.

Developing cultural understanding isn't just necessary for while you study. It is very important for reconciliation and future development in Myanmar.

Some examples of cultural dos and don'ts

Here are some cultural dos and don'ts of countries in South Asia. Which ones also apply in Myanmar?

Thailand

- Do not show the soles of your feet to others or sit with your feet pointing at someone.
- Do not touch people on the head.
- Women should not touch Buddhist monks or hand anything directly to a monk.
- Do not be disrespectful of the Thai Royal Family.
- Take off your shoes before entering someone's home.
- Avoid shouting and showing anger – it is seen as a lack of self-discipline.

Philippines

- Do invite people at least three times. Local residents are taught that it is proper to refuse the first time or two. To them, insistence is a clear sign that the offer or invitation is genuine.
- Do greet elderly Filipinos in any social situation. Filipino society accords great respect to its seniors.

India

- Do not point your finger at anyone. It is seen as a sign of annoyance.
- Dress conservatively.
- Wait for a female to initiate shaking hands as a greeting. Indian men do not generally shake hands with women out of respect. Namaste instead.

China

- A nod or a wave of hand is generally taken as a greeting especially from a distance.
- Direct eye contact in public may be mistaken as weird.
- Eat with chopsticks and a table spoon. Take whatever the host/hostess is serving. The more you eat, the happier he/she is.



Check your understanding

What cultural do's and don'ts would you recommend to someone visiting Myanmar?

5.11 Future plan

Plan ahead

You need to decide which university and the courses you would like to study. You may need to take an English or equivalence exam. If you do need to take an exam you will need to allow plenty of time to study for it.

Deadlines for university applications are many months in advance of the start of the semester, and scholarship applications have deadlines to allow the scholarship program to decide who will receive scholarships.

You also need to allow enough time to obtain your passport and make travel arrangements.

Applying for university often requires a year or more in preparation!



Practice

In the appendix of this section is an Application Schedule Template. This lists the things you need to do to prepare for university and the months where you should usually do these things. Use this template to plan your preparation for university.

** Note: The template has space for you to plan for three university and three scholarship applications. Applying for more than one of each increases your chances of being accepted to a university and offered a scholarship. Of course, the number of university applications you can make will depend partly on how many you can afford.*